

*An
Angler's
Anthology*

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W. SORLEY BROWN

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To

W. Percy Brown

from

Lambert Middleton

April 1932



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AN ANGLER'S
ANTHOLOGY

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Collected by
A. B. AUSTIN

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‘... FOR THIS TIME I HAVE NEITHER A WILL-
INGNESS NOR LEISURE TO SAY MORE, THAN
WISH THEE A RAINY EVENING TO READ THIS
BOOK IN, AND THAT THE EAST WIND MAY
NEVER BLOW WHEN THOU GOEST A-FISHING.’

From *THE COMPLEAT ANGLER*

Preface

NDREW LANG, writing on the tercentenary of Izaak Walton, made two remarks which at first sight appear to contradict each other, but which are really complementary.

‘Our angling literature,’ he said, ‘is copious, practical, full of anecdote; Walton alone gave it style’; and a little further on—‘His book reminds us that even the anglers of the Restoration were men with ears for the music of words; that in these days, a book, even about a sport, was literature.’

It is in the belief that there are still anglers who are ‘men with ears for the music of words’ that I have tried to compile this anthology. Ever since the publication of Dame Juliana Berners’ *Boke of St. Albans*, containing the ‘Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle,’ in 1496, an astonishing, and, from my point of view, an embarrassing number of anglers have tried to express in words either their pleasure in the sport, or the lore that they have gained from it, or both.

Even assuming that Andrew Lang was right when he implied that only Walton’s book could be called literature, it seemed incredible to me, when I read his words, that the enthusiasm which had gone to the making of hundreds of other volumes should not have touched with imagination and humour and colour and even music at least a sentence, a paragraph, perhaps a chapter, here and there. This anthology is therefore an attempt to bring together in small compass the passages that have seemed to me most memorable in the prose and poetry of angling from the *Boke of St. Albans* until the present day.

It is not meant to be a historical comparison of the methods of anglers during the past four centuries, but is designed for the

sportsman who should be, above all others, keen-eyed, quick of hearing, full of the lore of riverside and lochside, and quiet-minded.

For that reason it is not arranged chronologically, but falls into those compartments of thought and experience which come naturally to the angler—the days of his youth; the end of life; the curious ways of men and fishes, rivers and lakes; the sights and sounds that go to fill up the measure of his enjoyment by the waterside.

I have chosen freely from poets and prose writers who would not be found in any catalogue of angling books, whenever it appeared to me that they had something to say which might give pleasure to an angler.

My own preferences among poets and prose writers may have led me to overlook, here and there, poems and prose extracts that are the favourites of many readers. Suggestions that might help to make further editions, should there be a demand for them, fuller and richer, will be welcomed.

It would be ungrateful if I were to leave unacknowledged the kindness of my friend J. M. Gray, whose enthusiasm for the book and whose many suggestions have made my work much easier.

A. B. AUSTIN

Contents

PRAISE AND DISPRAISE

	PAGE
Recreation of Saints - - - - -	<i>Gervase Markham</i> - - 2
Oh the Gallant Fisher's Life - - - - -	<i>John Chalkhill</i> - - 2
For Joy of it All - - - - -	<i>Viscount Grey of Fallodon</i> - 4
The Angler's Song - - - - -	<i>Anonymous</i> (17th cent.) - 5
The Merry Man - - - - -	<i>Dame Juliana Berners</i> - 5
This Crafti Disport - - - - -	<i>Dame Juliana Berners</i> - 6
'Apologia Piscatoris' - - - - -	<i>Dr. Arthur Johnston</i> - 6
A Free Translation of 'Apologia Piscatoris' - - - - -	<i>Howard A. Gray</i> - - 7
Wanton Intrusion - - - - -	<i>William Scrope</i> - - 8
No Life so Happy - - - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - - 9
Men are to be Born so - - - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - - 9
A Maist Moral Amusement - - - - -	<i>Christopher North</i> - - 10
The Retirement - - - - -	<i>Charles Cotton</i> - - 10
The Lost Fish - - - - -	<i>Gilfrid W. Hartley</i> - - 13
Not to be Purchased - - - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - - 13
This Noble Emulation - - - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - - 14
Happy England - - - - -	<i>Oliver Goldsmith</i> - - 14
A Very Cruel Diversion - - - - -	<i>George Borrow</i> - - 14
That Solitary Vice - - - - -	<i>Lord Byron</i> - - 16
Stick and String - - - - -	<i>Dr. Johnson</i> (attrib.) - 16
Une bête à chaque bout - - - - -	<i>Jacques-Arsène Ancelot</i> - 17
Un Grand Imbécile - - - - -	<i>Martial Guyet</i> (attrib.) - 17
When I would beget content - - - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - - 17

DAYS OF YOUTH

A Boy's Song - - - - -	<i>James Hogg</i> - - - 20
Mrs. Duck and I - - - - -	<i>William Scrope</i> - - 20
Unhappy Ending - - - - -	<i>William Scrope</i> - - 20
Thirty Years Ago - - - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - - 21
Childish Joys - - - - -	<i>Christopher North</i> - - 23
The First Trout - - - - -	<i>Christopher North</i> - - 23
Tom Brown Caught - - - - -	<i>Thomas Hughes</i> - - 24
Thunderstorm - - - - -	<i>Viscount Grey of Fallodon</i> - 27
Noble Quarry - - - - -	<i>Eric Parker</i> - - 28
Night-Lines - - - - -	<i>Eric Parker</i> - - 29

MEN AND MANNERS

When Walton Wrote - - - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - - - 32
To Izaak Walton - - - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - - 32
The First Fisherman - - - - -	<i>Patrick R. Chalmers</i> - 33
The Inward Qualities - - - - -	<i>Gervase Markham</i> - - 33
To Andrew Lang - - - - -	<i>R. L. Stevenson</i> - - 34
Piscator and Christian - - - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - - 35
And lyk a fishser - - - - -	<i>Geoffrey Chaucer</i> - - 36
Give Me Mine Angle - - - - -	<i>William Shakespeare</i> - 36
Cleopatra - - - - -	<i>Beaumont and Fletcher</i> - 36
Will Wimble - - - - -	<i>Joseph Addison</i> - - 37
The Qualities of an Angler - - - - -	<i>John Dennys</i> - - 38
A Warlock wi' the Worm - - - - -	<i>Christopher North</i> - - 40
Wigs on the Green - - - - -	<i>Christopher North</i> - - 41
After Every Fly - - - - -	<i>Charles St. John</i> - - 42
London Methods - - - - -	<i>Charles St. John</i> - - 42
Theocritus in Scots - - - - -	<i>John Buchan</i> - - 43

	PAGE
The Angler's Song - - - - -	William Basse - - - 46
The Reverend Fisherman - - - - -	William Senior - - - 47
The Bait - - - - -	John Donne - - - 48
A Drink Like Nectar - - - - -	Izaak Walton - - - 49
I Could There Sit Quietly - - - - -	Izaak Walton - - - 49
An Honest Alehouse - - - - -	Izaak Walton - - - 50
Meddling - - - - -	Walter de la Mare - - - 50
A Very Good Quality in a Man - - - - -	George Eliot - - - 51
Sambre Fishermen - - - - -	R. L. Stevenson - - - 51
On the Willebroek Canal - - - - -	R. L. Stevenson - - - 52
The Fly Fisher's Train - - - - -	E. A. Barton - - - 52
Fisherman Billy - - - - -	H. T. Sheringham - - - 53
The Bridge Habit - - - - -	H. T. Sheringham - - - 54
The Tackle Shop - - - - -	H. T. Sheringham - - - 55
Bad Form in Fishing - - - - -	William Caine - - - 55
The First Mayfly - - - - -	W. Earl Hodgson - - - 56
Cockney Fishermen - - - - -	Sir Humphry Davy - - - 57
One in a Hundred - - - - -	Lt. Col. Peter Hawker - - - 57
The Weather Prophet - - - - -	L. S. - - - 58

ANGLING WAYS AND MEANS

Like the Mathematics - - - - -	Izaak Walton - - - 62
The Colouring of Lines - - - - -	Gervase Markham - - - 62
The Angler's Apparel - - - - -	Gervase Markham - - - 62
Garments of Russet or Grey - - - - -	John Dennys - - - 63
A Fish of Stubborne Sway - - - - -	William Browne - - - 63
Divers Methods - - - - -	John Mayer - - - 64
Eels and Wild Ducks - - - - -	John Mayer - - - 65
A More Delusive Art - - - - -	John Gay - - - 65
How the Wolf went A-fishing - - - - -	'Reynard the Fox' - - - 67
Neither Hook nor Line - - - - -	John Bunyan - - - 68
You that fish for Dace and Roches - - - - -	Llewellyn - - - 68
The Angler's Hours - - - - -	John Dennys - - - 69
Fresh-run - - - - -	Christopher North - - - 69
Your First Salmon - - - - -	James Conway - - - 70
Now is the Time - - - - -	James Thomson - - - 71
Salmon Secrets - - - - -	Viscount Grey of Fallodon - - - 71
Trolling - - - - -	W. Earl Hodgson - - - 72
An Angler's Farewell - - - - -	Thomas Hood - - - 72
Fixed Ideas - - - - -	W. F. R. Reynolds - - - 74
Abstract Fishing - - - - -	W. F. R. Reynolds - - - 74
Black Midge for Brown Lug - - - - -	Charles St. John - - - 75
The Boatie Rows - - - - -	John Ewen - - - 76
Cunning Fishermen - - - - -	John Maplet - - - 77
The Breeze is on the Heron-Lake - - - - -	Thomas Tod Stoddart - - - 77
A Birr! A Whirr! - - - - -	Thomas Tod Stoddart - - - 78
Before Breakfast - - - - -	H. T. Sheringham - - - 79
Killing a Pike - - - - -	Thomas Barker - - - 79
The Wet-Fly Man - - - - -	G. E. M. Skues - - - 80
Of Courage and the Jeopardising of Tuppence Ha'penny - - - - -	G. E. M. Skues - - - 80
A Dry-Fly Programme - - - - -	William Caine - - - 80
Fish Dinners - - - - -	Thomas Jordan - - - 82
Sportsman's Cookery - - - - -	Francis Francis - - - 82

FISHES

Heaven - - - - -	Rupert Brooke - - - 84
The Mermaid - - - - -	Sir Humphry Davy - - - 85

	PAGE
Staring Wights - - - - -	<i>Leigh Hunt</i> - - - 85
Of the Dragon of the Sea - - - - -	<i>Edward Topsell</i> - - - 85
To a Fish of the Brooke - - - - -	<i>John Wolcot</i> - - - 86
The Scaly Breed - - - - -	<i>Alexander Pope</i> - - - 86
The Oubie - - - - -	<i>Charles Kingsley</i> - - - 87
Eagle and Salmon - - - - -	<i>James Conway</i> - - - 87
Salmon - - - - -	<i>William Jeffrey</i> - - - 88
Lazy Fellows - - - - -	<i>Hon. Sir J. W. Fortescue</i> - - - 89
After the Spawning - - - - -	<i>Hon. Sir J. W. Fortescue</i> - - - 89
Salmon Leap - - - - -	<i>Michael Drayton</i> - - - 91
The Dog-fish and the Salmon - - - - -	<i>John Webster</i> - - - 91
The Town Trout - - - - -	<i>H. Plunket Greene</i> - - - 92
The Trout - - - - -	<i>Robert Bell</i> - - - 93
Chalk-stream Trout - - - - -	<i>The Earl of Buxton</i> - - - 93
The Unattainable - - - - -	<i>Patrick R. Chalmers</i> - - - 94
The Trout at the Bridge - - - - -	<i>William Caine</i> - - - 95
Ten Thousand Devils - - - - -	<i>Sir Charles J. Holmes</i> - - - 96
On Equal Terms - - - - -	<i>Sir Charles J. Holmes</i> - - - 97
The Trout - - - - -	<i>Michael Drayton</i> - - - 97
The Pike - - - - -	<i>Edmund Blunden</i> - - - 97
The Swallow and the Pike - - - - -	<i>W. H. Hudson</i> - - - 98
The Pike's Physician - - - - -	<i>Alexander Pope</i> - - - 99
The Pike - - - - -	<i>Robert Nobbs</i> - - - 99
Perch-fishing - - - - -	<i>Edmund Blunden</i> - - - 100
The Epicurean Way - - - - -	<i>Sir Humphry Davy</i> - - - 101
A Recipe - - - - -	<i>A. M. Young</i> - - - 101
The Fish - - - - -	<i>Rupert Brooke</i> - - - 102

RIVERS AND LAKES

For Wise Men and Fools - - - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - - - 106
Paradise - - - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - - - 106
Rivers Arise - - - - -	<i>John Milton</i> - - - 106
The River of Eden - - - - -	<i>John Milton</i> - - - 106
Northern River - - - - -	<i>George Borrow</i> - - - 107
Thus the Mayne glideth - - - - -	<i>Robert Browning</i> - - - 109
The Current - - - - -	<i>William Shakespeare</i> - - - 109
Test and Itchen - - - - -	<i>W. H. Hudson</i> - - - 110
The Bonny Tweed for Me - - - - -	<i>William A. Foster</i> - - - 111
The Muse - - - - -	<i>Robert Burns</i> - - - 111
A Day's Fishing at Cheney's - - - - -	<i>J. A. Froude</i> - - - 112
Yarrow - - - - -	<i>William Hamilton</i> - - - 113
Ode to Leven Water - - - - -	<i>Tobias Smollett</i> - - - 113
The Salmon River - - - - -	<i>Charles Kingsley</i> - - - 114
Lines on the River Severn - - - - -	<i>Michael Drayton</i> - - - 116
Walden Pond - - - - -	<i>Henry David Thoreau</i> - - - 117
Twilight on Tweed - - - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - - - 118
Rivers Don't Gi'e Out - - - - -	<i>William Barnes</i> - - - 119
Blagdon - - - - -	<i>H. Plunket Greene</i> - - - 119
Fishing Song - - - - -	<i>Charles Kingsley</i> - - - 120
In Praise of Tweed - - - - -	<i>Thomas Tod Stoddart</i> - - - 121
Tiny Waters - - - - -	<i>H. T. Sheringham</i> - - - 122
The River - - - - -	<i>Thomas Tod Stoddart</i> - - - 122
A Border Burn - - - - -	<i>J. B. Selkirk</i> - - - 123
The River of the Playing Fields - - - - -	<i>Eric Parker</i> - - - 124
A Waterfall - - - - -	<i>J. L. Foxworthy</i> - - - 125
Ballade of the Tweed - - - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - - - 125
The Pasture Pond - - - - -	<i>Edmund Blunden</i> - - - 126

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

PAGE

On a Banck as I Sate a-Fishing - - -	<i>Sir Henry Wotton</i> - -	130
When I was Last a-Fishing - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - -	130
In His Season - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - -	131
On a Summer's Day - - -	<i>John Keats</i> - -	131
Beauty born of Murmuring Sound - - -	<i>William Wordsworth</i> - -	132
Corot's Country - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - -	132
Coots and Moor-Hens - - -	<i>W. H. Hudson</i> - -	132
Little Grebes - - -	<i>W. H. Hudson</i> - -	133
The Little Grebe Goes Fishing - - -	<i>W. H. Hudson</i> - -	134
Triumph of the Little Grebes - - -	<i>W. H. Hudson</i> - -	134
On the Pleasant Brinke - - -	<i>John Denny</i> - -	135
The Reeds in the Loch say: - - -	<i>Anonymous</i> - -	137
In Early Spring - - -	<i>Sir Humphry Davy</i> - -	137
Ode to the Setting Sun - - -	<i>Francis Thompson</i> - -	138
Contemplation - - -	<i>Francis Thompson</i> - -	138
The River's Trembling Edge - - -	<i>Percy Bysshe Shelley</i> - -	138
Chalk Stream Day - - -	<i>Viscount Grey of Fallodon</i> - -	139
Goddess of the Silver Lake - - -	<i>John Milton</i> - -	140
Hide me from Day's Garish Eie - - -	<i>John Milton</i> - -	141
A Land of Drowsy-head - - -	<i>James Thomson</i> - -	141
Prognostics of the Weather - - -	<i>Thomas Best</i> - -	141
Fair Days - - -	<i>Robert Herrick</i> - -	142
How Springs came First - - -	<i>Robert Herrick</i> - -	142
Hope Well and Have Well - - -	<i>Robert Herrick</i> - -	143
Country Dreams - - -	<i>Richard Corbet</i> - -	143
English Streams - - -	<i>Washington Irving</i> - -	144
God of the River - - -	<i>Beaumont and Fletcher</i> - -	144
Stainless Water - - -	<i>G. A. B. Dewar</i> - -	146
The Angler's Wish - - -	<i>Izaak Walton</i> - -	146
Trolling Song - - -	<i>Thomas Tod Stoddart</i> - -	147
The Dragonfly - - -	<i>Walter Savage Landor</i> - -	148
Golden Plover - - -	<i>Eric Parker</i> - -	148
A Faun's Holiday - - -	<i>Robert Nichols</i> - -	149
Strings in the Earth - - -	<i>James Joyce</i> - -	151
Mind Under Water - - -	<i>Richard Jefferies</i> - -	151
Days too Short - - -	<i>W. H. Davies</i> - -	152
The Evening Rise - - -	<i>Patrick R. Chalmers</i> - -	152
Spring Salmon - - -	<i>Patrick R. Chalmers</i> - -	153
England and Spring - - -	<i>Sir William Beach Thomas</i> - -	154
Sound o' Water - - -	<i>William Barnes</i> - -	154
Overlooking the River Stour - - -	<i>Thomas Hardy</i> - -	155
The Dominion of the Dumb - - -	<i>A. M. Young</i> - -	155

THE END OF LIFE

Less Unready to Die - - -	<i>Walter Savage Landor</i> - -	158
The Skeleton Angler - - -	<i>J. J. Manley</i> - -	158
Tam Samson Dead - - -	<i>Robert Burns</i> - -	159
The Devout Angler - - -	<i>Colin D. B. Ellis</i> - -	160
The Last Chance - - -	<i>Andrew Lang</i> - -	161
Fareweel to Coquet - - -	<i>Thomas Doubleday</i> - -	161
Death's Trade - - -	<i>Anonymous (17th cent.)</i> - -	162
The Old Angler - - -	<i>Walter de la Mare</i> - -	163
The Old Fisherman - - -	<i>Viola Gerard Garvin</i> - -	166
Fisher Jamie - - -	<i>John Buchan</i> - -	166
The Fisherman - - -	<i>Robert Bell</i> - -	168

Index to Authors

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.—Every effort has been made to trace the present owners of copyrights. The Editor and the Publishers wish to acknowledge their thanks to the individuals and firms (indicated below by an asterisk) for permission to include extracts in this Anthology

	PAGE
<i>Addison, Joseph, 1672-1719</i>	
Will Wimble - - - - -	37
<i>Ancelot, Jacques-Arsène, 1794-1854</i>	
Une bête à chaque bout - - - - -	17
<i>Anonymous (seventeenth century)</i>	
The Angler's Song - - - - -	5
<i>Anonymous</i>	
The Reeds in the Loch say: - - - - -	137
<i>Anonymous (seventeenth century)</i>	
Death's Trade - - - - -	162
<i>Barker, Thomas, fl. 1651</i>	
Killing a Pike - - - - -	79
<i>Barnes, William, 1801-1886 *(Kegan Paul Trench)</i>	
Rivers Don't Gi'e Out - - - - -	119
Sound o' Water - - - - -	154
<i>Barton, E. A. (Country Life)*</i>	
The Fly Fisher's Train - - - - -	52
<i>Basse, William, 1583(?) - 1653</i>	
The Angler's Song - - - - -	46
<i>Beaumont, Francis, 1586-1616 (and Fletcher, John)</i>	
Cleopatra - - - - -	36
God of the River - - - - -	144
<i>Bell, Robert*</i>	
The Trout - - - - -	93
The Fisherman - - - - -	168
<i>Berners, Dame Juliana, b. 1388(?)</i>	
The Merry Man - - - - -	5
This Crafti Disport - - - - -	6
<i>Best, Thomas, fl. 1787</i>	
Prognostics of the Weather - - - - -	141
<i>Blunden, Edmund, 1896- *(Sidgwick and Jackson)</i>	
The Pike - - - - -	97
Perch Fishing - - - - -	100
The Pasture Pond - - - - -	126
<i>Borrow, George, 1803-1881</i>	
A Very Cruel Diversion - - - - -	14
Northern River - - - - -	107
<i>Brooke, Rupert, 1887-1915 *(Sidgwick & Jackson) (Dodd, Mead & Co., U.S.A.)</i>	
Heaven - - - - -	84
The Fish - - - - -	102
<i>Browne, William, 1588-1643</i>	
A Fish of Stubborne Sway - - - - -	63
<i>Browning, Robert, 1812-1889 *(John Murray)</i>	
Thus the Mayne Glideth - - - - -	109
<i>Buchan, John, 1875-*(Thomas Nelson)</i>	
Theocritus in Scots - - - - -	43
Fisher Jamie - - - - -	166
<i>Bunyan, John, 1628-1688</i>	
Neither Hook nor Line - - - - -	68

	PAGE
<i>Burns, Robert, 1759-1796</i>	
The Muse - - - - -	111
Tam Samson Dead - - - - -	159
<i>Buxton, The Earl of, 1853-*(John Murray)</i>	
Chalk Stream Trout - - - - -	93
<i>Byron, Lord, 1788-1824</i>	
That Solitary Vice - - - - -	16
<i>Caine, William *(Phillip Allan)</i>	
Bad Form in Fishing - - - - -	55
A Dry Fly Programme - - - - -	80
The Trout at the Bridge - - - - -	95
<i>Chalkhill, John (seventeenth century)</i>	
Oh the Gallant Fisher's Life - - - - -	2
<i>Chalmers, Patrick R.*</i>	
The First Fisherman - - - - -	33
The Unattainable - - - - -	94
The Evening Rise - - - - -	152
Spring Salmon - - - - -	153
<i>Chaucer, Geoffrey, 1340(?) - 1400</i>	
And Lyk a Fisser - - - - -	36
<i>Conway, James</i>	
Your First Salmon - - - - -	70
Eagle and Salmon - - - - -	87
<i>Corbet, Richard (Bishop of Norwich), 1582-1634</i>	
Country Dreams - - - - -	143
<i>Cotton, Charles, 1630-1687</i>	
The Retirement - - - - -	10
<i>Davies, W. H., 1871-*(Jonathan Cape)</i>	
Days too Short - - - - -	152
<i>Davy, Sir Humphry, 1778-1829</i>	
Cockney Fishermen - - - - -	57
The Mermaid - - - - -	85
In Early Spring - - - - -	137
<i>De la Mare, Walter, 1873-*(Constable & Co.) (Henry Holt, U.S.A.)</i>	
Meddling - - - - -	50
The Old Angler - - - - -	163
<i>Dennys, John, d. 1609</i>	
The Qualities of an Angler - - - - -	38
Garments of Russet or Gray - - - - -	63
The Angler's Hours - - - - -	69
On the Pleasant Brinke - - - - -	135
<i>Dewar, G. A. B., 1862-*</i>	
Stainless Water - - - - -	146
<i>Donne, John, 1573-1631</i>	
The Bait - - - - -	48
<i>Doubleday, Thomas, 1790-1870</i>	
Fareweel to Coquet - - - - -	161
<i>Drayton, Michael, 1563-1631</i>	
The Trout - - - - -	97
Salmon Leap - - - - -	91
Lines on the River Severn - - - - -	116
<i>Eliot, George, 1819-1880</i>	
A Very Good Quality in a Man - - - - -	51
<i>Ewen, John, 1741-1821</i>	
The Boatie Rows - - - - -	76
<i>Ellis, Colin D. B.* (London Mercury)</i>	
The Devout Angler - - - - -	160

	PAGE
<i>Fletcher, John, 1579-1625 (and Beaumont, Francis)</i>	
Cleopatra - - - - -	36
God of the River - - - - -	144
<i>Fortescue, The Hon. Sir J. W., 1859-*(Macmillan & Co.) (Macmillan Co., U.S.A.)</i>	
Lazy Fellows - - - - -	88
After the Spawning - - - - -	89
<i>Foster, William A., b. 1801</i>	
The Bonny Tweed for Me - - - - -	111
<i>Foxworthy, J. L.*</i>	
A Waterfall - - - - -	125
<i>Francis, Francis (The Field)*</i>	
Sportsman's Cookery - - - - -	82
<i>Froude, J. A., 1818-1894* (Longmans Green)</i>	
A Day's Fishing at Cheneys - - - - -	112
<i>Garvin, Viola Gerard*</i>	
The Old Fisherman - - - - -	166
<i>Gay, John, 1688-1732</i>	
A More Delusive Art - - - - -	65
<i>Goldsmith, Oliver, 1728-1774</i>	
Happy England - - - - -	14
<i>Gray, Howard A., 1870-*</i>	
'Apologia Piscatoris:' A Free Translation - - - - -	7
<i>Greene, H. Plunket, 1865-*(Phillip Allan) (Houghton Mifflin, U.S.A.)</i>	
The Town Trout - - - - -	92
Blagdon - - - - -	119
<i>Grey, Viscount (of Fallodon), 1862-*(J. M. Dent & Sons)</i>	
For Joy of it All - - - - -	4
Thunderstorm - - - - -	27
Salmon Secrets - - - - -	71
Chalk Stream Day (Constable) (Houghton Mifflin, U.S.A.) - - - - -	139
<i>Guyet, Martial</i>	
Un Grand Imbecile - - - - -	17
<i>Hamilton, William, 1704-1754</i>	
Yarrow - - - - -	113
<i>Hardy, Thomas, 1840-1928*(Macmillan & Co.)</i>	
Overlooking the River Stour - - - - -	155
<i>Hartley, Gilfrid W.* (Wm. Blackwood & Sons)</i>	
The Lost Fish - - - - -	13
<i>Hawker, Lt.-Col. Peter, 1786-1853</i>	
One in a Hundred - - - - -	57
<i>Herrick, Robert, 1591-1674</i>	
Fair Days - - - - -	142
How Springs Came First - - - - -	142
Hope Well and Have Well - - - - -	143
<i>Hodgson, W. Earl, d. 1910*(A. & C. Black)</i>	
The First Mayfly - - - - -	56
Trolling - - - - -	72
<i>Hogg, James, 1770-1835</i>	
A Boy's Song - - - - -	20
<i>Holmes, Sir Charles J., 1868-*</i>	
Ten Thousand Devils - - - - -	96
On Equal Terms - - - - -	97
<i>Hood, Thomas, 1798-1845</i>	
An Angler's Farewell - - - - -	72
<i>Hudson, W. H., 1841-1922*(J. M. Dent & Sons) (E. P. Dutton, U.S.A.)</i>	
The Swallow and the Pike - - - - -	98
Test and Itchen - - - - -	110

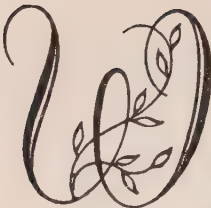
	PAGE
<i>Hudson, W. H.—continued</i>	
Coots and Moor Hens - - - - -	132
Little Grebes - - - - -	133
The Little Grebe Goes Fishing - - - - -	134
Triumph of the Little Grebes - - - - -	134
<i>Hughes, Thomas, 1882-1896</i>	
Tom Brown Caught - - - - -	24
<i>Hunt, Leigh, 1784-1859</i>	
Staring Wights - - - - -	85
<i>Irving, Washington, 1783-1859</i>	
English Streams - - - - -	144
<i>Jefferies, Richard, 1848-1887 *(Chatto & Windus)</i>	
Mind Under Water - - - - -	151
<i>Jeffrey, William*</i>	
Salmon - - - - -	88
<i>Johnson, Dr. Samuel, 1709-1784</i>	
Stick and String (attributed) - - - - -	16
<i>Johnston, Dr. Arthur, 1587-1641</i>	
'Apologia Piscatoris' - - - - -	6
<i>Jordan, Thomas, 1612-1685</i>	
Fish Dinners - - - - -	82
<i>Joyce, James, 1882- *(Jonathan Cape)</i>	
Strings in the Earth - - - - -	151
<i>Keats, John, 1795-1821</i>	
On a Summer's Day - - - - -	131
<i>Kingsley, Charles, 1819-1875</i>	
The Oubit - - - - -	87
The Salmon River - - - - -	114
Fishing Song - - - - -	120
<i>Landor, Walter Savage, 1775-1864</i>	
The Dragonfly - - - - -	148
Less Unready to Die - - - - -	158
<i>Lang, Andrew, 1844-1912 *(Messrs. Longmans Green)</i>	
Thirty Years Ago - - - - -	21
When Walton Wrote (Mrs. Lang) - - - - -	32
To Izaak Walton - - - - -	32
Piscator and Christian - - - - -	35
Paradise - - - - -	106
Twilight on Tweed - - - - -	118
Ballade of the Tweed - - - - -	125
Corot's Country - - - - -	132
The Last Chance - - - - -	161
<i>Llewellyn</i>	
You that Fish for Dace and Roches - - - - -	68
<i>L. S.*</i>	
The Weather Prophet (<i>Country Life</i>) - - - - -	58
<i>Manley, J. J.</i>	
The Skeleton Angler - - - - -	158
<i>Maplet, John, d. 1592</i>	
Cunning Fishermen - - - - -	77
<i>Markham, Gervase, 1568(?) - 1637</i>	
Recreation of Saints - - - - -	2
The Inward Qualities - - - - -	33
The Colouring of Lines - - - - -	62
The Angler's Apparel - - - - -	62

	PAGE
<i>Mayer, John</i> , fl. 1823	
Divers Methods - - - - -	64
Eels and Wild Ducks - - - - -	65
<i>Milton, John</i> , 1608-1674	
Rivers Arise - - - - -	106
The River of Eden - - - - -	106
Goddess of the Silver Lake - - - - -	140
Hide me from Day's Garish Eie - - - - -	141
<i>Nichols, Robert</i> , 1893- *(Chatto & Windus)	
A Faun's Holiday - - - - -	149
<i>Nobbs, Robert</i> , 1652(?) - 1706	
The Pike - - - - -	99
<i>North, Christopher</i> (Professor John Wilson), 1785-1854	
A Maist Moral Amusement - - - - -	10
Childish Joys - - - - -	23
The First Trout - - - - -	23
A Warlock wi' the Worm - - - - -	40
Wigs on the Green - - - - -	41
Fresh-run - - - - -	69
<i>Parker, Eric</i> , 1870- *(John Murray)	
Noble Quarry - - - - -	28
Night-Lines - - - - -	29
The River of the Playing Fields - - - - -	124
Golden Plover - - - - -	148
<i>Pope, Alexander</i> , 1688-1744	
The Scaly Breed - - - - -	86
The Pike's Physician - - - - -	99
' <i>Reynard the Fox</i> '	
How the Wolf went a-fishing - - - - -	67
<i>Reynolds, W. F. R.</i> * (<i>Country Life</i>)	
Fixed Ideas - - - - -	74
Abstract Fishing - - - - -	74
<i>Scrope, William</i> , 1722-1852	
Wanton Intrusion - - - - -	8
Mrs. Duck and I - - - - -	20
Unhappy Ending - - - - -	20
<i>St. John, Charles</i>	
After Every Fly - - - - -	42
London Methods - - - - -	42
Black Midge for Brown Lug - - - - -	75
<i>Selkirk, J. B.</i>	
A Border Burn - - - - -	123
<i>Senior, William</i> *(Chatto & Windus)	
The Reverend Fisherman - - - - -	47
<i>Shakespeare, William</i> , 1564-1616	
Give me mine Angle - - - - -	36
The Current - - - - -	109
<i>Shelley, Percy Bysshe</i> , 1792-1822	
The River's Trembling Edge - - - - -	138
<i>Sheringham, H. T.</i> , 1876-*	
Fisherman Billy - - - - -	53
The Bridge Habit - - - - -	54
The Tackle Shop - - - - -	55
Before Breakfast - - - - -	79
Tiny Waters - - - - -	122

	PAGE
<i>Skues, G. E. M.</i> *(A. & C. Black)	
The Wet Fly Man - - - - -	80
Of Courage and the Jeopardising of Tuppence Ha'penny - - -	80
<i>Smollett, Tobias G.</i> , 1721-1771	
Ode to Leven Water - - - - -	113
<i>Stevenson, R. L.</i> , 1850-1894 *(Chatto & Windus) (Scribners, U.S.A.)	
To Andrew Lang - - - - -	34
Sambre Fishermen - - - - -	51
On the Willebroek Canal - - - - -	52
<i>Stoddart, Thomas Tod</i> , 1810-1880	
The Breeze is on the Heron Lake - - - - -	77
A Birr! A Whirr! - - - - -	78
In Praise of Tweed - - - - -	121
The River - - - - -	122
Trolling Song - - - - -	147
<i>Thomas, Sir William Beach</i> *	
England and Spring - - - - -	154
<i>Thompson, Francis</i> , 1859-1907 *(Wilfrid Meynell)	
Ode to the Setting Sun - - - - -	138
Contemplation - - - - -	138
<i>Thomson, James</i> , 1700-1748	
Now is the Time - - - - -	71
A Land of Drowsy-head - - - - -	141
<i>Thoreau, Henry David</i> , 1817-1862	
Walden Pond - - - - -	117
<i>Topsell, Edward</i> , d. 1638(?)	
Of the Dragon of the Sea - - - - -	85
<i>Walton, Izaak</i> , 1593-1683	
No Life so Happy - - - - -	9
Men are to be Born so - - - - -	9
Not to be Purchased - - - - -	13
This Noble Emulation - - - - -	14
When I Would Begot Content - - - - -	17
A Drink like Nectar - - - - -	49
I could there sit quietly - - - - -	49
An Honest Alehouse - - - - -	49
Like the Mathematics - - - - -	62
For Wise Men and Fools - - - - -	106
When I was last a-Fishing - - - - -	130
In His Season - - - - -	131
The Angler's Wish - - - - -	146
<i>Webster, John</i> , d. 1630(?)	
The Dog-fish and the Salmon - - - - -	91
<i>Wolcot, John</i> , 1738-1819	
To a Fish of the Brooke - - - - -	86
<i>Wordsworth, William</i> , 1770-1850	
Beauty born of murmuring sound - - - - -	132
<i>Wotton, Sir Henry</i> , 1568-1639	
On a Banck as I sate a-Fishing - - - - -	130
<i>Young, A. M.</i> , 1864-1926 *(Mrs. Florence Young)	
A Recipe - - - - -	101
The Dominion of the Dumb - - - - -	155

Praise and Dispraise

Recreation of Saints

HAT worke unto men can be more thankfull, than the discourse of that pleasure which is most comely, most honest, and giving the most liberty to Divine Meditation! And that without question is the Art of Angling, which having bin most hurtlessly necessary, hath been the Sport and Recreation of God's Saints, of most holy Fathers, and many worthy and Reverend Divines both dead and at this time breathing.

GERVASE MARKHAM
from COUNTRY CONTENTMENTS

Oh the Gallant Fisher's Life

OH, the gallant Fisher's life,
It is the best of any;
'Tis full of pleasure, void of strife,
And 'tis belov'd of many:
Other joys
Are but toys;
Only this
Lawful is ;
For our skill
Breeds no ill,
But content and pleasure.
In a morning up we rise
Ere Aurora's peeping;
Drink a cup to wash our eyes;
Leave the sluggard sleeping;
Then we go
To and fro, "
With our knacks
At our backs,
To such streams
As the Thames,
If we have the leisure.

When we please to walk abroad
For our recreation,
In the fields is our abode
Full of delectation:
Where in a brook
With a hook,
Or a lake,
Fish we take:
There we sit,
For a bit,
Till we fish entangle.

We have gentles in a horn,
We have paste and worms too;
We can watch both night and morn,
Suffer rain and storms too;
None do here
Use to swear;
Oaths do fray
Fish away;
We sit still,
And watch our quill;
Fishers must not wrangle.

If the sun's excessive heat
Make our bodies swelter,
To an osier hedge we get
For a friendly shelter;
Where in a dike,
Perch or Pike,
Roach or Dace,
We do chase;
Bleak or Gudgeon
Without grudging;
We are still contented.

Or we sometimes pass an hour
Under a green willow,

That defends us from a shower,
Making earth our pillow;
Where we may
Think and pray
Before death
Stops our breath.
Other joys
Are but toys,
And to be lamented.

JOHN CHALKHILL

'For Joy of it All'

OMETIMES I think that sea trout fishing is the best of all sport. It combines the wildness of salmon fishing, with the independence of trout fishing, and one may have all the excitement of hooking large fish without using a heavy rod and heavy tackle. There is less rule and less formality about it than there is about salmon fishing, and there seems more scope for the individuality of the angler. Perhaps this is partly because the sea trout season comes so directly after a long period of work in the stale air of cities, and coincides with the first burst into freedom and fresh atmosphere. The difference is so great in August, after a few days of exercise in the air of the North, that there come times when the angler, who wanders alone after sea trout down glens and over moors, has a sense of physical energy and strength beyond all his experience in ordinary life. Often after walking a mile or two on the way to the river, at a brisk pace, there comes upon one a feeling of 'fitness,' of being made of nothing but health and strength so perfect, that life need have no other end but to enjoy them. It is as though till that moment one had breathed with only a part of one's lungs, and as though now for the first time the whole lungs were filling with air. The pure act of breathing at such times seems glorious. People talk of being a child of nature, and moments such as these are the times when it is possible to feel so; to know the full joy of animal life—to desire nothing beyond. There are times when I have stood still for joy of it all, on my way

through the wild freedom of a Highland moor, and felt the wind, and looked upon the mountains and water and light and sky, till I felt conscious only of the strength of a mighty current of life, which swept away all consciousness of self, and made me a part of all that I beheld.

VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON
from FLY-FISHING

The Angler's Song

MAN's life is but vain, for 'tis subject to pain
And sorrow, and short as a bubble;
'Tis a hodge-podge of business and money and care
And care and money and trouble.

But we'll take no care when the weather proves fair,
Nor will we now vex though it rain;
We'll banish all sorrow, and sing till to-morrow,
And angle and angle again.

ANONYMOUS (17th Century)

The Merry Man

'AND YET atte the best he hath his holsom walke & mery at his ease. The swete ayre of the swete savoure of the meede floures makyth hym hungry. He hereth the melodyous armony of fowles. He seeth the yonges wannes, heerons, duckes, cotes and many other foules with theyr brodes. Whyche me semyth better than alle the noyse of the houndys, the blastes of the hornys & the crye of foulis that hunters, fawkeners and foulers can make. And yf the angler take fysshe, surely thenne is there noo man merier than he is in his spyryte. Also who soo woll use the game of anglynge, he must ryse erly. Whiche thyng is prouffyttable to man in this wyse. That is to wyte: moost to the heele of his soule, for it shall cause hym to be holy, and to the heele of his body, for it shall cause hym to be hole. Also to the encrease of his goodys, for it shall make hym ryche.'

DAME JULIANA BERNERS
from A TREATYSE OF FYSSHYNGE WYTH AN ANGLE

This Crafti Disport

TAKE GOOD hede that in going about your disportes ye open no man's gates but that ye shet them again. Also ye shall not use this forsayd crafti disport for no covetousness to the encreasing and sparing of your money only, but principally for your solace and to cause the heele of your body and specyally of your soule.

DAME JULIANA BERNERS

from A TREATYSE OF FYSSHYNGE WYTH AN ANGLE

'Apologia Piscatoris'

SEPTIMA lux festa est, sed iners et inutile terris
Quis, nisi mentis inops, tempus id esse putet?

.

Salmo meis hodie salit et lescivit in undis,
Cras fugiens supero figet in amne larem.
Cur mihi subduci patiar mea, mentis egenus?
Cur, ego quas pavi, glutiat alter oves?

.

Lux sacra cur offert praedam, si retia pandi
Non sinit? hac homines ludificantur ope.
Sed nec opus piscator obit, cum retia laxat;
Hoc apud antiquos nil nisi ludus erat.
Orbe pererrato silvas venator et auceps
Dum peragrant, nimius vexat utrumque labor.
Ars mihi nil praeter delectamenta ministrat,
Quemque vetant leges, cura labore caret.

.

Retia cum cessant, venamur arundine pisces,
Curvaeque mendaci condimus aera dape.
Protinus in praedam caecae gens nescia technae
Involat, et nimia credulitate perit.
Pabula si desunt (quis enim tot millia pascat?)
Aera solent pluma multicolore tegi.
Assilit illicio salmo tirunculus, hamum
Mox vorat, at praedae praeda fit ipse suae.

Quid faciat? se mergit aquis, indultaque lina
Infelix lacero, qua fugit, ore trahit.
Nunc ruit in praeceps, revolat nunc obvius amni,
Nunc miser obliquo tramite verrit aquas.
Nunc se trubidulis rotat et luctatur in undis,
Nunc hiat, et sero guttura vana quatit.
Mille fatigatus meandris flumina tandem
Linqvit, et in sicco littore praeda jacet.

.
Grex pius Isacidum liquidas Babylonis ad undas
Mille dedit lacrimas et pia vota Deo.
Sic ego propter aquas solenni luce litabo,
Audiet et nostras utraque ripa preces.

DR. ARTHUR JOHNSTON *sometime* RECTOR MAGNIFICUS
of the UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

A Free Translation of 'Apologia Piscatoris'

'SEE thou keep the Seventh Day,'
But surely not in slacker's way?
My pool this morn may hold a fish—
Tomorrow gone, another's dish!
Why should the sport be there, if we
To follow it cannot be free?
The shooter *works*, you well may say,
But fishing never was but play.
When nets are off, we try the bait,
Beguiling many to their fate.
If bait is short, there's still the fly
To flash in their responsive eye.
'He's on'—away go yards of line,
Down stream, then up; before he's mine
He forges o'er to find a hole,
Now weakening he begins to roll;
A leap, a splash, the drama's played,
And safely on the sand he's laid.

By Babel's streams did Israel's kind
Their God and country call to mind.
So I, in mood not less Sabbatic,
Will hold my services aquatic.

HOWARD A. GRAY

Wanton Intrusion

MUCH HAS been said by various humane persons about the cruelty of fishing. . . . Let us see how the case stands. I take a little wool and feather, and, tying it in a particular manner upon a hook, make an imitation of a fly; then I throw it across the river, and let it sweep round the stream with a lively motion. This I have an undoubted right to do, for the river belongs to me or my friend; but mark what follows. Up starts a monster fish with his murderous jaws, and makes a dash at my little Andromeda. Thus he is the aggressor, not I; his intention is evidently to commit murder. He is caught in the act of putting that intention into execution. Having wantonly intruded himself on my hook, which I contend he had no right to do, he darts about in various directions, evidently surprised to find that the fly, which he hoped to make an easy conquest of, is much stronger than himself. I naturally attempt to regain this fly, unjustly withheld from me. The fish gets tired and weak in his lawless endeavours to deprive me of it. I take advantage of his weakness, I own. I drag him, somewhat loth, to the shore, where one rap at the back of the head ends him in an instant. If he is a trout, I find his stomach distended with flies. That beautiful one called the May-fly, who is by nature almost ephemeral, who rises up from the bottom of the shallows, spreads its light wings, and flits in the sunbeam in enjoyment of its new existence, no sooner descends to the surface of the water to deposit its eggs, than the unfeeling fish at one fell spring numbers him prematurely with the dead. You see, then, what a wretch a fish is; no ogre is more bloodthirsty, for he will devour his own nephews, nieces, and even his own children, when he can catch them; and I take some credit for having shown him up. Talk of a wolf, indeed, a lion, or a tiger! Why these are mild

and saintly in comparison with a fish. When did anyone hear of Messrs. Wolf, Lion and Co. eating up their grandchildren? What a bitter fright must the smaller fry live in! They crowd the shallows, lie hid among the weeds, and dare not say the river is their own. I relieve them of their apprehensions, and thus become popular with the small shoals.

WILLIAM SCROPE

from DAYS AND NIGHTS OF SALMON FISHING IN THE TWEED

No Life so Happy

‘NO LIFE, my honest scholar, no life so happy and so pleasant as the life of a well-governed angler; for when the lawyer is swallowed up with business, and the statesman is preventing or contriving plots, then we sit on cowslip-banks, hear the birds sing, and possess ourselves in as much quietness as these silent silver streams, which we now see glide so quietly by us.’

IZAAK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

‘Men are to be Born so’

‘ANGLING IS somewhat like poetry, men are to be born so: I mean, with inclinations to it, though both may be heightened by discourse and practice: but he that hopes to be a good angler, must not only bring an inquiring, searching, observing wit, but he must bring a large measure of hope and patience, and a love and propensity to the art itself; but having once got and practised it, then doubt not but angling will prove to be so pleasant, that it will prove to be, like virtue, a reward to itself.’

IZAAK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

'A Maist Moral Amusement'

Shepherd: . . . It's a maist innocent, poetical, moral & religious amusement. Gin I saw a fisher gruppin creelfu' after creelfu' o' troots, and then flingin' them awa among the heather and the brackens on his way hame, I micht begin to suspec that the idiot was by nature rather a savage. But, as for me, I send presents to my freens, & devour dizzens on dizzens every week in the family—maistly dune in the pan, wi' plenty o' fresh butter & roun' meal—sae that prevents the possibility o' cruelty in my fishin', & in the fishin' o' a' reasonable creatures.

CHRISTOPHER NORTH
from NOCTES AMBROSIANAE

The Retirement

FAREWELL, thou busy world, and may
 We never meet again;
Here I can eat, and sleep, and pray,
And do more good in one short day
Than he who his whole age outwears
Upon thy most conspicuous theatres,
Where nought, but vanity and vice appears.

Good God! how sweet are all things here!
How beautiful the fields appear!
How cleanly do we feed and lie!
Lord! what good hours do we keep!
 How quietly we sleep!

What peace! what unanimity!
How innocent from the lewd fashion
Is all our business, all our recreation!

Oh how happy here's our leisure!
Oh how innocent our pleasure!
Oh ye valleys, oh ye mountains!
Oh ye groves and crystal fountains,
 How I love at liberty,
By turn to come and visit ye!

Dear solitude, the soul's best friend,
That man acquainted with himself dost make,
And all his Maker's wonders to intend:
 With thee I here converse at will,
 And would be glad to do so still,
For it is thou alone that keep'st the soul awake.

How calm and quiet a delight
 It is alone
To read, and meditate, and write,
By none offended, and offending none!
To walk, ride, sit, or sleep at one's own ease,
And pleasing a man's self, none other to displease!

Oh my beloved nymph! fair Dove;
Princess of rivers, how I love
Upon thy flowery banks to lie;
 And view thy silver stream,
When gilded by a summer's beam,
And in it all thy wanton fry
 Playing at liberty,
And with my angle upon them
 The all of treachery
I ever learnt, industriously to try.

Such streams Rome's yellow Tyber cannot show,
Th' Iberian Tagus, nor Ligurian Po;
 The Meuse, the Danube, and the Rhine
Are puddle-water all compar'd with thine;
And Loire's pure streams yet too polluted are
 With thine, much purer to compare;
The rapid Garonne, and the winding Seine,
 Are both too mean,
Beloved Dove, with thee
To vie priority;
Nay, Tame and Isis, when conjoin'd, submit,
And lay their trophies at thy silver feet.

Oh my beloved rocks! that rise
To awe the earth, and brave the skies,

From some aspiring mountain's crown,
How dearly do I love,
Giddy with pleasure, to look down;
And, from the vales to view the noble heights above!
Of my beloved caves! from dog-star's heat
And all anxieties, my safe retreat:
What safety, privacy, what true delight,
In the artificial night,
Your gloomy entrails make,
Have I taken, do I take!
How oft when grief has made me fly,
To hide me from society
Even of my dearest friends, have I,
In your recesses' friendly shade,
All my sorrows open laid,
And my most secret woes, intrusted to your privacy!

Lord! would men let me alone,
What an over-happy one
Should I think myself to be;
Might I in this desert place
(Which most men in discourse disgrace)
Live but undisturb'd and free!
Here, in this despis'd recess,
Would I, maugre winter's cold,
And the summer's worst excess,
Try to live out to sixty full years old;
And, all the while,
Without an envious eye
On any thriving under fortune's smile,
Contented live, and then contented die.

CHARLES COTTON
(STANZES IRRÉGULIERS TO MR. IZAAK WALTON)

The Lost Fish

TO BE suddenly divorced from a very big salmon after a long fight is—in this country at least—the greatest misfortune which can happen to a sportsman: one which admits of no hope, or possible later victory. To miss an extremely good stag is a bitter experience—but then, before the day is over, you may get him again in a better place, and kill him; you may come across him the next week or the next season. But when a big fish gets off, he is to all intents and purposes lost to you for ever. In one small fraction of a second you jump from highest hope to the blankest despair. Once in some blue moon a man may catch a fish in which the broken tackle of a previous day still remains, but the chance is not worth considering: if after an hour's fight you part company, it is as well to realise that you part company for ever. Some one, maybe in the autumn, may catch that salmon, with a great bony hook in his lower jaw; but even if that man was you, the captured one would be far different from the splendid sea-fresh monster which triumphed over you in July. . . .

As there is nothing which in a moment makes a tired, despondent, perhaps hopeless, man suddenly become alert and keen as the hooking of a big fish, so there can be few things more appalling than the sudden losing of him when he is nearly done. There is no gradation, or slowing down as it were: the gap is immediate and immense. He is on, and you are full of the most exhilarating hope: he is off, and with the speed of light, blank misery is upon you.

GILFRID W. HARTLEY

from WILD SPORT AND SOME STORIES

Not to be Purchased

'NAY, LET me tell you, there be many that have forty times our estates, that would give the greatest part of it to be healthful and cheerful like us, who, with the expense of a little money, have eat and drunk, and laughed, and angled, and sung, and slept securely; and rose next day and cast away care, and sung, and laughed, and angled again; which are blessings rich men cannot purchase with all their money.'

IZAAK WALTON

. 13 . *from* THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

'This Noble Emulation'

'I WILL tell you, scholar, I once heard one say, "I envy not him that eats better meat than I do; nor him that is richer, or that wears better clothes than I do: I envy nobody but him, and him only, that catches more fish than I do." And such a man is like to prove an angler; and this noble emulation I wish to you, and all young anglers.'

IZAAK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

Happy England

HAPPY ENGLAND! where the sea furnishes an abundant and luxurious repast; where the angler, in cheerful solitude, strolls by the edge of the stream and fears neither the coiled snake nor the lurking crocodile; where he can retire at night with his few trouts, to borrow the pretty description of old Walton, to some friendly cottage, where the landlady is good, and the daughters innocent; where the room is cleanly, with lavender in the sheets, and twenty ballads stuck about the wall! There he can enjoy the company of a talkative brother sportsman, have his trouts dressed for supper, tell tales, sing old tunes, or make a catch! There he can talk of the wonders of nature with learned admiration, or find some harmless sport to content him, and pass away a little time, without offence to God or injury to man!

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

from THE HISTORY OF THE EARTH AND OF ANIMATED NATURE

'A Very Cruel Diversion'

AND THERE I sat upon the bank, at the bottom of the hill which slopes down from 'the Earl's Home'; my float was on the waters, and my back was towards the old hall. I drew up many fish, small and great, which I took from off the hook mechanically, and flung upon the bank, for I was almost unconscious of what I was about, for my mind was not with my fish. I was thinking of my earlier

years—of the Scottish crags and the heaths of Ireland—and sometimes my mind would dwell on my studies—on the sonorous stanzas of Dante, rising and falling like the waves of the sea—or would strive to remember a couplet or two of poor Monsieur Boileau.

‘Canst thou answer to thy conscience for pulling all those fish out of the water, and leaving them to gasp in the sun?’ said a voice, clear and sonorous as a bell.

I started, and looked round. Close behind me stood the tall figure of a man, dressed in raiment of quaint and singular fashion, but of goodly materials. He was in the prime and vigour of manhood; his features handsome and noble, but full of calmness and benevolence; at least I thought so, though they were somewhat shaded by a hat of finest beaver, with broad drooping eaves.

‘Surely that is a very cruel diversion in which thou indulgest, my young friend?’ he continued.

‘I am sorry for it, if it be, sir,’ said I, rising; ‘but I do not think it cruel to fish.’

‘What are thy reasons for not thinking so?’

‘Fishing is mentioned frequently in Scripture. Simon Peter was a fisherman.’

‘True; and Andrew and his brother. But thou forgettest: they did not follow fishing as a diversion, as I fear thou doest.—Thou readest the Scriptures?’

‘Sometimes.’

‘Sometimes? not daily? that is to be regretted. What profession dost thou make? I mean to what religious denomination dost thou belong, my young friend?’

‘Church.’

‘It is a very good profession—there is much of Scripture contained in its liturgy. Dost thou read aught beside the Scriptures?’

‘Sometimes.’

‘What dost thou read besides?’

‘Greek and Dante.’

‘Indeed; then thou hast the advantage over myself; I can only read the former. Well, I am rejoiced to find that thou hast other pursuits beside thy fishing. Dost thou know Hebrew?’

‘No.’

‘Thou shouldest study it. Why dost thou not undertake the study?’

‘I have no books.’

‘I will lend thee books, if thou wish to undertake the study. I live yonder at the hall, as perhaps thou knowest. I have a library there, in which are many curious books, both in Greek and Hebrew, which I will show to thee, whenever thou mayest find it convenient to come and see me. Farewell! I am glad to find that thou hast pursuits more satisfactory than thy cruel fishing.’

And the man of peace departed, and left me on the bank of the stream. Whether from the effect of his words, or from want of inclination to the sport, I know not, but from that day I became less and less a practitioner of that ‘cruel fishing.’ I rarely flung line and angle into the water, but I not unfrequently wandered by the banks of the pleasant rivulet.

GEORGE BORROW
from LAVENGRO

‘That Solitary Vice’

AND angling, too, that solitary vice,
Whatever Isaac Walton sings or says:
The quaint old cruel coxcomb in his gullet
Should have a hook & a small trout to pull it.

LORD BYRON
from DON JUAN

Stick and String

FLY-FISHING MAY be a very pleasant amusement; but angling, or float-fishing, I can only compare to a-stick and a string, with a *worm* at one end and a *fool* at the other.

ATTRIBUTED TO DR. JOHNSON

‘Une bête à chaque bout’

‘LA LIGNE est un instrument où il y a une bête à chaque bout.’

ANCELOT

from L’HOMME DU MONDE

Un Grand Imbécile

‘LA ligne, avec sa canne, c’est un instrument
Dont le plus mince bout tient un petit reptile,
Et dont l’autre est tenu par un grand imbécile.’

ATTRIBUTED TO MARTIAL GUYET

‘When I would beget content’

Venator. ‘... when I would beget content, and increase confidence in the power, and wisdom, and providence of Almighty God, I will walk the meadows, by some gliding stream, and there contemplate the lilies that take no care, and those very many other various little living creatures that are not only created, but fed, man knows not how, by the goodness of the God of Nature, and therefore trust in Him. This is my purpose; and so, let everything that hath breath praise the Lord: and let the blessing of St. Peter’s Master be with mine.

Piscator. And upon all that are lovers of virtue; and dare trust in His providence; and be quiet; and go a-angling.

“Study to be quiet.”

IZAAK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

Days of Youth

A Boy's Song

WHERE the pools are bright and deep,
Where the grey trout lies asleep,
Up the river and over the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me.

JAMES HOGG

Mrs. Duck and I

T ANOTHER time, whilst still a *puer*, and only possessed of one single bait-hook, to my utter confusion I found that solitary hook had been swallowed by a duck, which a mass of sedges under the bank had concealed from my view. There we were, Mrs. Duck and I, swattering down the stream; the duck all the time declaring her sentiments by the utterance of a fearful noise, and I endeavouring by every means in my power to prevent my only hook from being ravished from me by a feathered opponent. In the meantime a group of lasses who were washing clothes at the river side, and were friendly to the bird, set on me, first with their tongues, of the use of which they seemed to be in full possession, and latterly with their pails and watering pans; in consequence of which I was compelled to snap my line, and turn upon my fair tormentors. But let no boy of fourteen ever try to face a batch of lasses. In fine, I was terribly mauled, and did not feel my ears at all comfortable in their externals for a considerable time afterwards.

WILLIAM SCROPE

from DAYS AND NIGHTS OF SALMON FISHING IN THE TWEED

Unhappy Ending

I RESOLVED to take a few casts in a dark and deep pool which was close at hand, and then bend my course homeward. There I hooked a fine fish, which I was obliged to play for some time, and then, after he was nearly tired, to lift out with my hands,

not having yet arrived at the dignity of a landing-net. In stooping low to perform this process, the lid of my new pet basket, which from want of experience, I had omitted to fasten, flew open, and two or three of my last-killed fish dropped into deep water immediately before me. In suddenly reaching forward to secure these, round came my basket, fish and all, over my head, and fairly capsized me. With some difficulty, and even risk of drowning, I got my head above water, and my hand on the crown of a sharp rock. There I stood, streaming and disconsolate, casting a wistful look at the late bright inmates of my basket, which were tilting down the weeds through the gullet into a tremendous pool, vulgarly known as Hell's Cauldron. Into that same pool with the ominous name I myself very nearly passed, and thus had followed my hat, which was coursing about in the eddy or wheel of this fearful depth. Thus vanished before my eyes my whole day's sport, for dead fish immediately sink, and it was not without some skilful fishing up that my hat and I renewed our acquaintance.

WILLIAM SCROPE

from DAYS AND NIGHTS OF SALMON FISHING IN THE TWEED

'Thirty Years Ago'

IT WAS worth while to be a boy in the South of Scotland, and to fish the waters haunted by old legends, musical with old songs, and renowned in the sporting essays of Christopher North and Stoddart. Even then, thirty long years ago (1860), the old stagers used to tell us that 'the watter was ower sair fished,' and they grumbled about the system of draining the land, which makes a river a roaring torrent in floods, and a bed of grey stones with a few clear pools and shallows during the rest of the year. In times before the hills were drained, before the manufacturing towns were so populous, before pollution, netting, dynamiting, poisoning, sniggling, and the enormous increase of fair and unfair fishing, the border must have been the angler's paradise. Still, it was not bad when we were boys. We had Ettrick within a mile of us, and a finer natural trout-stream there is not in Scotland, though now the water only holds a sadly persecuted remnant. . . .

Thirty years ago the burns that feed St. Mary's Loch were almost unfished, and rare sport *we* had in them, as boys, staying at Tibbie Sheil's famous cottage, and sleeping in her box-beds, where so often the Ettrick Shepherd and Christopher North have lain, after copious toddy. "'Tis gone, 'tis gone': not in our time will any man, like the Ettrick Shepherd, need a cart to carry the trout he has slain in Meggat Water. . . .

When I last rowed past Meggat foot the delta of that historic stream was simply crowded with anglers, stepping in in front of each other. I asked if this mob was a political 'demonstration,' but they stuck to business, as if they had been on the Regent's Canal. And this, remember, was twenty miles from any town! . . . Probably the troops who fish our Border burns still manage to toss out some dozens of tiny fishes, some six or eight to the pound. Are not these triumphs chronicled in the *Scotsman*? But they cannot imagine what great trout dwelt below the linns of the Crosscleugh burn, beneath the red clusters of the rowantrees, or in the waters of the 'Little Yarrow' above the Loch of the Lowes. As to the lochs themselves, now that there is perpetual trolling, as well as fly-fishing, so that every fish knows the lures, the fun is mainly over.

Nothing can be so good as what is old, and, so far as angling goes, is practically ruined, the alternate pool and stream of the Border waters, where

The triple pride
Of Eildon looks over Strathclyde,

and the salmon cast murmurs hard by the Wizard's grave. They are all gone now, the old allies and tutors in the angler's art—the kind gardener who baited our hooks; the good Scottish judge who gave us our first collection of flies; the friend who took us with him on his salmon-fishing expedition, and made men of us with real rods, and 'pirns' of ancient make. The companions of those times are scattered, and live under strange stars and in converse seasons, by troutless waters. It is no longer the height of pleasure to be half-drowned in Tweed, or lost on the hills with no luncheon in the basket. But, except for scarcity of fish, the scene is very little altered, and one is a boy again, in heart, beneath the elms of Yair, or by the Hullets at Ashiesteil. How-

ever bad the sport, it keeps you young, or makes you young again, and you need not follow Ponce de Léon to the western wilderness, when, in any river you knew of yore, you can find the Fountain of Youth.

ANDREW LANG
from ANGLING SKETCHES

Childish Joys

THE sweetest visions of our boyish years
Come to our spirits with a murmuring tone
Of running waters, and one stream appears
Remember'd all, tree, willow, bank, and stone;
How glad were we, when after sunny shower
Its voice came to us issuing from the school!
How fled the vacant, solitary hours,
By dancing rivulet, or silent pool!
And still our souls retain in manhood's prime
The love of joys our childish years that blest;
So now encircled by these hills sublime,
We Anglers, wandering with a tranquil breast,
Build in this happy vale a fairy bower of rest!

CHRISTOPHER NORTH
from THE ANGLER'S TENT

The First Trout

FROM THAT hour angling is no more a mere delightful day-dream, haunted by the dim hopes of imaginary minnows, but a reality—an art—a science—of which the flaxen-headed school-boy feels himself to be master—a mystery in which he has been initiated; and off he goes now, all alone, in the power of successful passion, to the distant brook—brook a mile off—with fields, and single trees, and little groves, and a huge forest of six acres, between him and the house in which he is boarded or was born! There flows on the slender music of the shadowy willows—there pours the deeper din of the birch-tree'd waterfall. The sacred

water-pyets flit away from stone to stone, and dipping, disappears among the airy bubbles, to him a new sight of joy and wonder. And oh! how sweet the scent of the broom or furze, yellowing along the braes, where leap the lambs, less happy than he, on the knolls of sunshine! His grandfather has given him a half-crown rod in two pieces—yes, his line is of hair twisted—plaited by his own, soon-instructed little fingers. By Heavens, he is fishing with the fly! And the Fates, who, grim and grisly as they are painted to be by full-grown, ungrateful, lying poets, smile like angels upon the paidler in the brook, winnowing the air with their wings into western breezes, while at the very first throw the yellow trout forsakes his fastness beneath the bog-wood, and with a lazy wallop, and then a sudden plunge, and then a race like lightning, changes at once the child into the boy, and shoots through his thrilling and aching heart the ecstasy of a new life expanding in that glorious pastime, even as a rainbow on a sudden brightens up the sky. *Fortuna favet fortibus*—and with one long pull, and strong pull, and pull altogether, Johnny lands a twelve-incher on the soft, smooth, silvery sand of the only bay in all the burn where such an exploit was possible.

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

from RECREATIONS OF CHRISTOPHER NORTH

Tom Brown Caught

NOW CAME on the may-fly season; the soft hazy summer weather lay sleepily along the rich meadows by Avon side, and the green and gray flies flickered with their lazy up and down flight over the reeds and the water and the meadows in myriads upon myriads. . . .

Every little pitiful coarse fish in the Avon was on the alert for the flies, and gorging his wretched carcase with hundreds daily, the gluttonous rogues! and every lover of the gentle craft was out to avenge the poor may-flies.

So one fine Thursday afternoon, Tom, having borrowed East's new rod, started by himself to the river. He fished for some time with small success: not a fish would rise at him; but as he prowled

along the bank he was presently aware of mighty ones feeding in a pool on the opposite side, under the shade of a huge willow-tree. The stream was deep there, but some fifty yards below was a shallow, for which he made off hot-foot; and forgetting landlords, keepers, solemn prohibitions of the Doctor, and everything else, pulled up his trousers, plunged across, and in three minutes was creeping along on all fours towards the clump of willows.

It isn't often that great chub, or any other coarse fish, are in earnest about anything, but just then they were thoroughly bent on feeding, and in half an hour Master Tom had deposited three thumping fellows at the foot of the giant willow. As he was baiting for a fourth pounder, and just going to throw in again, he became aware of a man coming up the bank not one hundred yards off. Another look told him that it was the under-keeper. Could he reach the shallow before him? No, not carrying his rod. Nothing for it but the tree; so Tom laid his bones to it, shinning up as fast as he could, and dragging up his rod after him. He had just time to reach and crouch along upon a huge branch some ten feet up, which stretched over the river, when the keeper arrived at the clump. Tom's heart beat fast as he came under the tree; two steps more and he would have passed, when as ill-luck would have it, the gleam on the scales of the dead fish caught his eye, and he made a dead point at the foot of the tree. He picked up the fish one by one; his eye and touch told him that they had been alive and feeding within the hour. Tom crouched lower along the branch, and heard the keeper beating the clump. 'If I could only get the rod hidden,' thought he, and began gently shifting it to get it alongside of him; 'willow-trees don't throw out straight hickory shoots twelve feet long, with no leaves, worse luck.' Alas! the keeper catches the rustle, and then a sight of the rod, and then of Tom's hand and arm.

'Oh, be up ther' be 'ee?' says he, running under the tree. 'Now you come down this minute.'

'Tree'd at last,' thinks Tom, making no answer, and keeping as close as possible, but working away at the rod, which he takes to pieces: 'I'm for it unless I can starve him out.' And then he begins to meditate getting along the bank for a plunge, and scramble to the other side; but the small branches are so thick,

and the opposite bank so difficult, that the keeper will have lots of time to get round by the ford before he can get out, so he gives that up. And now he hears the keeper beginning to scramble up the trunk. That will never do; so he scrambled himself back to where his branch joins the trunk, and stands with lifted rod.

‘Hullo, Velveteens, mind your finger if you come any higher.’

The keeper stops and looks up, and then with a grin says. ‘Oh! be you, be it, young measter? Well, here’s luck. Now I tells ’ee to come down at once, and it’ll be best for ’ee.’

‘Thank’ee, Velveteens, I’m very comfortable,’ said Tom, shortening the rod in his hand, and preparing for battle.

‘Werry well, please yourself,’ says the keeper, descending however to the ground again, and taking his seat on the bank; ‘I bean’t in no hurry, so you may take your time. I’ll larn’ee to gee honest folk names afore I’ve done with ’ee.’

‘My luck as usual,’ thinks Tom, ‘what a fool I was to give him a black. If I’d called him “keeper” now I might get off. The return match is all his way.’

The keeper quietly proceeded to take out his pipe, fill, and light it, keeping an eye on Tom, who now sat disconsolately across the branch, looking at keeper—a pitiful sight for men and fishes. The more he thought of it the less he liked it. ‘It must be getting near second calling-over,’ thinks he. Keeper smokes on stolidly. ‘If he takes me up I shall be flogged safe enough. I can’t sit here all night. Wonder if he’ll rise at silver.’

‘I say, keeper,’ said he meekly, ‘let me go for two bob?’

‘Not for twenty neither,’ grunts his persecutor.

And so they sat on till long past second calling-over, and the sun came slanting in through the willow branches, and telling of locking-up near at hand.

‘I’m coming down, keeper,’ said Tom at last, with a sigh, fairly tired out. ‘Now what are you going to do?’

‘Walk’ee up to School and give ’ee över to the Doctor, them’s my orders,’ says Velveteens, knocking the ashes out of his fourth pipe, and standing up and shaking himself.

‘Very good,’ said Tom; ‘but hands off, you know. I’ll go with you quietly, so no collaring or that sort of thing.’

Keeper looked at him a minute—‘Werry good,’ said he at last;

and so Tom descended and wended his way drearily by the side of the keeper up to the School-house, where they arrived just at locking-up. As they passed the School-gates, the Tadpole and several others who were standing there caught the state of things, and rushes out, crying, 'Rescue!' but Tom shook his head, so they only followed to the Doctor's gate and went back sorely puzzled.

How changed and stern the Doctor seemed from the last time Tom was up there, as the keeper told the story, not omitting to state how Tom had called him blackguard names. 'Indeed, sir,' broke in the culprit, 'it was only Velveteens.' The Doctor only asked one question.

'You know the rule about the banks, Brown?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then wait for me to-morrow, after first lesson.'

'I thought so,' muttered Tom.

'And about the rod, sir?' went on the keeper. 'Master's told me as we might have all the rods . . .'

'Oh, please, sir,' broke in Tom, 'the rod isn't mine.' The Doctor looked puzzled; but the keeper, who was a good-hearted fellow, and melted at Tom's evident distress, gave up his claim. Tom was flogged next morning and a few days afterwards met Velveteens, and presented him with half-a-crown for giving up the rod claim and they became sworn friends; and I regret to say that Tom had many more fish from under the willow that may-fly season, and was never caught again by Velveteens.

THOMAS HUGHES

from TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS

Thunderstorm

ONE BURN I used to fish which flowed through a wood of high trees down a steep rocky channel. Here it was possible, at least for a small boy, to keep out of sight by walking up the bed of the burn itself, stooping low, jerking the worm up into little pools and cascades above, and lifting the trout out down stream on to the bank. This was very pretty work. I remember getting several trout quickly one after the other in this place, and then they suddenly

stopped taking. One little favourite pool after another produced nothing, and a fear of something unknown came over me; the gloom and stillness of the wood made me uneasy, everything about me seemed to know something, to have a meaning which was hidden from me; and I felt as if my fishing was out of place. At last I could resist the feeling of apprehension no longer; I left the rod with the line in a pool to fish for itself, and went up to the edge of the wood to see what was happening in the open world outside. There was a great storm coming up full of awful menace, as thunderclouds often are. It filled me with terror. I hurried back for my rod, left the burn and the wood, and fled before the storm, going slow to get breath now and then, and continually urged to running again by the sound of the thunder behind me.

VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON
from FLY-FISHING

‘Noble Quarry’

FISHING IN those days was certainly not actively encouraged, either by authority or by other boys. . . . All who regarded the angler demonstrated his unworthiness to him. Only once do I remember that a master spoke to me when I was fishing, and then the lowliness of my condition was at once made plain to me. It was an ‘after four’ in the summer half; I was fishing for pike in Fellow’s Pond, and I had caught two, which lay on the bank; one, perhaps, weighed three pounds, the other two pounds and a half. I was aware of one who approached and who from a fitting distance inquired in what way I might be employing myself. Having a rod in my hand which was connected with a float in the water, I answered that I was fishing. An index finger was pointed from above at my two pike, which were indeed the best and largest fish I had up to that time taken. ‘And are these the noble quarry?’ I was asked. They had seemed to me noble. ‘What do you propose to do with them?’ I had not considered this question and could give no satisfactory assurance as to their future. I was left with them; they seemed less important than before.

ERIC PARKER
from ETON IN THE EIGHTIES

Night-Lines

IGHT-LINES in the Thames were illegal; but one night-line, at least, was set. It was a line which terminated in six feet of green-stained gut, which was at that time esteemed as better than gut unstained; it was held in the eddies by a flat leger-head, painted green, and the bait on a crystal hook was the tail of a carefully cleaned lob-worm. It was set in the meeting of the currents at the corner below Sixth form bench, in the dusk of a November afternoon; and in the dark of the next morning, a quarter of an hour before early school, it was visited and lifted. And there at the end of it, tugging and fighting, was a large dace. I do not guess at his length or weight, but he remains the greatest of all dace since taken; he brings back to me, with the grey-green of his scales and the slender shape of him pulling at the green gut in the eddies, the cold and dark of that November morning, the smell of the river water, the wind blowing on wet fingers and a soaked line.

ERIC PARKER

from ETON IN THE EIGHTIES



Men and Manners

When Walton Wrote



UR angling literature is copious, practical, full of anecdote; Walton alone gave it style. He is not so much unrivalled as absolutely alone. Heaven meant him for the place he filled, as it meant the cowslip and the mayfly. He wrote with love and he wrote in leisure, not pursued about the land by printers' devils and proof-sheets. Some of his sweetest sentences—rich, musical and melancholy—he is known to have meditated, and he practised writing them out in various forms till he found perfection. In words he was an artist, and a careful artist, weighing syllables and adjusting ideas to their form. Yet he seems—that is the skill of his touch—to write with a flowing pen, without blotting a line. There is no derangement of epithets about his manner. The authors of England owe him praise no less than the anglers. His book reminds us that even the anglers of the Restoration were men with ears for the music of words; that in these days, a book, even about a sport, was literature.

ANDREW LANG

from THE TERCENTENARY OF IZAAC WALTON

'To Izaak Walton'

OLD IZAAC, in this angry age of ours—
This hungry, angry age—how oft of thee
We dream, and thy divine tranquillity;
And all thy pleasure in the dewy flowers,
The meads enamelled and the singing showers,
And shelter of the silvery willow-tree,
By quiet waters of the river Lea!
Ah, happy hours! we cry—ah, halcyon hours!

Yet thou, like us, hadst trouble for this realm
Of England: for thy dear Church mocked and rent,
Thy friends in beggary, thy monarch slain,
But naught could thy mild spirit overwhelm.
Ah, Father Izaak, teach us thy content
When time brings many a sorrow back again.

The First Fisherman

BESIDE a vast and primal sea
A solitary savage he,
Who gathered for his tribe's rude need
The daily dole of raw sea-weed.
He watched the great tides rise and fall,
And spoke the truth—or not at all!
Along the awful shore he ran
A simple pre-Pelasgian;
A thing primeval, undefiled,
Straightforward as a little child,—
Until one morn he made a grab
And caught a mesozoic crab!
Then—told the tribe at close of day
A bigger one had got away!
From him have sprung (I own a bias
To ways the cult of rod and fly has)
All fishermen—and Ananias!

PATRICK R. CHALMERS

from GREEN DAYS AND BLUE DAYS

The Inward Qualities

‘NOW FOR the inward qualities of mind, albeit some writers reduce them to twelve heads, which indeed whosoever enjoyeth cannot chuse but be very complete in much reflection; yet I must draw them into many more branches. And first, & most essential where-of is, that a skilful angler ought to be a general scholar, & seen in all the liberal sciences; as a grammarian, to know how either to write or discourse of his art in true & fitting terms, either without affectation or rudeness, and should have some sweetness of speech to persuade others & engage to delight in an exercise so much laudable.

... An angler must be full of love, both to his pleasure and to his neighbour; to his pleasure, which otherwise will be irksome and tedious; and to his neighbour, that he never give offence in any particular, nor be guilty of any general destruction.

... He should not be unskilful in musick, that whenever either melancholy, heaviness of his thoughts, or the perturbation of his own fancies, stirreth up sadness in him, he may remove the same with some godly hymn or anthem, of which David gives us ample examples.'

GERVASE MARKHAM

from COUNTRY CONTENTMENTS

To Andrew Lang

DEAR ANDREW, with the brindled hair,
Who glory to have thrown in air,
High over arm, the trembling reed,
By Ale and Kail, by Till and Tweed:
An equal craft of hand you show
The pen to guide, the fly to throw:
I count you happy starred; for God
When he with inkpot and with rod
Endowed you, bade your fortune lead
Forever by the crooks of Tweed,
Forever by the woods of song
And lands that to the Muse belong;
Or if in peopled streets, or in
The abhorred pedantic sanhedrim,
It should be yours to wander, still
Airs of the morn, airs of the hill,
The plovery Forest and the seas
That break about the Hebrides,
Should follow over field and plain
And find you at the window pane;
And you again see hill and peel,
And the bright springs gush at your heel.
So went the fiat forth, and so
Garrulous like a brook you go,

With sound of happy mirth and sheen
Of daylight—whether by the green
You fare that moment, or the gray;
Whether you dwell in March or May;
Or whether treat of reels and rods
Or of the old unhappy gods:
Still like a brook your page has shone,
And your ink sings of Helicon.

R. L. STEVENSON

Piscator and Christian

Walton and Bunyan were men who should have known each other. It is a pleasant fancy to me that they may have met on the banks of the Ouse, while John was meditating a sermon, and Izaak was 'Attentive of his trembling quill.'—
AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Piscator to Christian: As for my 'burden' 'twas pleasant to me to bear it; for, like not the least of the Apostles, I am a fisher, and I carried trout. But I take no shame in that I am an angler; for angling is somewhat like poetry; men are to be born so, and I would not be otherwise than my Maker designed to have me. . . . Nor have I any experience of conflict with the Evil One; wherefore I thank him that hath set me in pleasant fields, by clear waters, where come no wicked whispers (be they from Apollyon or from our own hearts); but there is calmness of spirit and a world of blessings attending upon it. And hence can no man see the towers of Doubting Castle, for the green trees and the hedges white with May. . . . As to what awaits me on the other side of that River, I do expect it with a peaceful heart, and in humble hope that a man may reach the city with a cheerful countenance, no less than through groans and sighs and fears. . . . But now falls there a sweet shower, 'a singing shower' saith old George Chapman, and methinks I shall have sport; for I do note that the Mayfly is up; and, seeing all these beautiful creatures playing in the air and water, I feel my own heart play within me; and I must out and dap under yonder sycamore tree. Wherefore, prithee, pardon me a longer discourse as at this time.

ANDREW LANG
from OLD FRIENDS

And lyk a fissher'

AND lyk a fissher, as men alday may see,
Baiteth his angle-hook with som pleasaunce,
Til mony a fish is wood til that he be
Sesed ther-with; and then at erst hath he
Al his desyr, and ther-with al mischaunce;
And thogh the lyne breke, he hath penaunce;
For with the hoke he wounded is so sore,
That he his wages hath for ever-more.

CHAUCER

from THE COMPLEYNT OF MARS

'Give Me Mine Angle'

Cleopatra: Give me mine angle, we'll to th' river; there,
My music, playing far off, I will betray
Tawny-finn'd fishes; my bended hook shall pierce
Their slimy jaws, and as I draw them up
I'll think them every one an Antony,
And say, 'Ah, ha! you're caught!'

Charmian: 'Twas merry when
You wager'd on your angling; when your diver
Did hang a salt-fish on his hook, which he
With fervency drew up.

SHAKESPEARE

from ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Cleopatra

'SHE was used to take delight, with her fair hand
To angle in the Nile, where the glad fish,
As if they knew who 'twas sought to deceive them,
Contended to be taken.'

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

Will Wimble

AS I was yesterday morning walking with Sir Roger before his house, a country fellow brought him a huge fish, which he told him Mr. William Wimble had caught that very morning; and that he presented it with his service to him, and intended to come and dine with him. At the same time he delivered a letter which he read to me as soon as the messenger left him.

‘SIR ROGER,

I desire you to accept of a Jack, which is the best I have caught this season. I intend to come and stay with you a week and see how the Perch bite in the Black-River. I observed with some concern, the last time I saw you upon the Bowling-green, that your whip wanted a lash to it: I will bring half a dozen with me that I twisted last week, which I hope will serve you all the time you are in the country. I have not been out of the saddle for six days last past, having been at Eaton with Sir John’s eldest son. He takes to his learning hugely.

‘I am, Sir, your humble servant,

‘WILL. WIMBLE.’

This extraordinary letter, and the message that accompanied it, made me very curious to know the character and quality of the gentleman who sent them; which I found to be as follows. Will Wimble is younger brother to a baronet, and descended of the ancient family of Wimbles. He is now between forty and fifty; but being bred to no business, and born to no estate, he generally lives with his elder brother as superintendent of his game. He hunts a pack of dogs better than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding out a hare. He is extraordinarily well versed in all the little handicrafts of an idle man: he makes a May-fly to a miracle; and furnishes the whole country with angle-rods. As he is a good-natured officious fellow, and very much esteemed upon account of his family, he is a welcome guest at every house, and keeps up a good correspondence among all the gentlemen about him. He carries a tulip-root in his pocket from one to another, or exchanges a puppy between a couple of friends that live perhaps in the opposite sides of the county. Will is a particular favourite of all the young heirs, whom he frequently

obliges with a net that he has weaved, or a setting-dog that he has *made* himself: he now and then presents a pair of garters of his own knitting to their mothers or sisters; and raises a great deal of mirth among them, by inquiring as often as he meets them, 'how they wear?' These gentleman-like manufactures, and obliging little humours make Will the darling of the county.

JOSEPH ADDISON
from THE SPECTATOR

The Qualities of an Angler

THE first is Faith, not wavering and unstable;
But such as had that holy patriarch old,
That to the Highest was so acceptable.
As his increase of offspring manifold,
Exceeded far the stars innumerable;
So must he still a firm persuasion hold,
That where as waters, brooks & lakes are found,
There store of fish without all doubt abound.

.

The second gift and quality is Hope,
The anchor hold of every hard desire;
That having of the day so large a scope
He shall in time to wish'd hap aspire,
And ere the sun hath left the heav'nly cope
Obtain the sport & game he doth desire;
And that the fish, though sometimes slow to bite,
Will recompense delay with more delight.

The third is love & liking to the game,
And to his friend & neighbour dwelling by;
For greedy pleasure not to spoil the same,
Nor of his fish some portion to deny
To any that are sickly, weak or lame;
But rather with his line and angle try
In pond or brook, to do what in him lies
To take such store for them as may suffice.

Then followeth Patience, that the furious flame
Of Choler cools, & Passion puts to flight;
As doth a skilful rider break & tame
The courser wild & teach him tread aright:
So patience doth the mind dispose & frame
To take mishaps in worth & count them light;
 As loss of fish, line, hook or lead, or all,
 Or other chance that often may befall.

The fifth good gift is low Humility;
As when a lion coucheth for his prey,
So must he stoop or kneel upon his knee
To save his line or put the weeds away;
Or lie along some times if need there be
For any let or chance that happen may:
 And not to scorn to take a little pain
 To serve his turn, his pleasure to obtain.

The sixth is painful Strength & Courage good,
The greatest to encounter in the brook,
If that he happen in his angry mood
To snatch your bait & bear away your hook.
With wary skill to rule him in the flood
Until more quiet, tame & mild he look:
 And all adventures constantly to bear,
 That may betide, without mistrust or fear.

Next unto this is Liberality,
Feeding them oft with full and plenteous hand
Of all the rest a needful quality
To draw them near the place where you will stand
Like to the ancient hospitality,
That sometime dwelt in Albion's fertile land;
 But now is sent away into exile
 Beyond the bounds of Isabella's isle.

The eighth is Knowledge, how to find the way,
To make them bite when they are dull & slow;
And what doth let the same & breeds delay;
And every like impediment to know,

That keeps them from their food & wonted prey.
Within the stream, or standing waters low,
And with Experience skilfully to prove,
All other faults to mend or to remove.

The ninth is placability of mind,
Contented with a reasonable dish;
Yea though sometimes no sport at all he find
Or that the weather prove not to his wish.
The tenth is Thanks to that God of each kind,
To net & bait, doth send both fowl & fish;
And still reserve enough in secret store
To please the rich & to relieve the poor.

Th' eleventh good gift & hardest to endure,
Is Fasting long from all superfluous fare;
Unto the which he must himself inure
By exercise & use of diet spare:
And with the liquor of the waters pure
Acquaint himself if he cannot forbear;
And never on his greedy belly think,
From rising sun until alow he sink.

The twelfth & last of all is Memory,
Remembering well before he setteth out,
Each needful thing that he must occupy;
And not to stand of any want in doubt
Or leave something behind forgetfully:
When he hath walked the fields & brooks about,
It were a grief back to return again,
For things forgot that should his sport maintain.

JOHN DENNYS
from THE SECRETS OF ANGLING

'A Warlock wi' the Worm'

Shepherd: . . . He's just a warld's wunner wi' the sweevil, 'a warlock wi' the worm, and wi' the flee a feenisher. It's a pure pleesur to see him playin' a pounder wi' a single hair. After the first twa-

three rushes are ower, he seems to wile them wi' a charm awa' into the side, ontill the gerss or the grevvell, whare they lie in the sunshine as if they were asleep. His tackle, for bricht airless days, is o' gossamere; and at a wee distance aff, you think he's fishin' without ony line ava, till whirr gangs the pirn, and up springs the sea trout, silver-bricht, twa yards out o' the water, by a delicate jerk o' the wrist, hyucked inextricably by the tongue clean ower the barb o' the Kirby-bend. Midge-flees!

CHRISTOPHER NORTH
from NOCTES AMBROSIANAE

Wigs on the Green

North: You never beat me at the fishing, sir, and never will beat me at the fishing, sir, while your name is Hogg. I killed that day—in half the time—double the number——

Shepherd: But wecht, sir—wecht. My creel was mair nor dooble yours's wecht—and every wean kens that in fishin' for a wager wecht wins—it's aye decided by wecht.

North: The weight of your basket was not nearly equal to mine, you——

Shepherd: Confound me gin, on an average, ane o' my troots didna conteen mair cubic inches than three o' yours—while, I had ane to produce that, on his first showin' his snoot, I could hae sworn was a sawmon;—he would hae filled the creel his ain lane—sae I sent him hame wi' a callant I met gaun to the school. The feck o' yours was mere fry—and some had a' the appearance o' bein' baggy mennons. You're a gran' par-fisher, sir, but you're nae Thorburn either at troots, morts, or fish.

North (starting up in a fury): I'll fish you for——

Shepherd: Mr. North! I'm ashamed to see you exposin' yoursel' afore Mr. De Quinshy—besides, thae ragin' fits are dangerous—and, some time or ither, 'ill bring on apoplexy. Oh! but you're fearsome the noo—black in the face, or rather blue and purple—and a' because I said that you're nae Thorburn at the fishin'! Sit doun—sit doun, sir.

(Mr. North sits down, and cools and calms himself.)

CHRISTOPHER NORTH
from NOCTES AMBROSIANAE

After Every Fly . . .

THIS YEAR I was fishing on a river in the North of Scotland where there was plenty of anglers, young and old, good and bad. There was one old piscator, who was most assiduous in his attention to the river, and whom I have seen for hours together at one small pool; changing his bait from fly to worm and from worm to fly, as he fancied the inclinations of the fish might be turned at the moment. One day we saw him in his usual position at the head of a rocky pool, and found that he had risen a salmon. After tempting the fish with every fly contained in an old bible, which served as a fishing book, without success, he told us, as we greeted him in passing, that he *would* have the fish before dark: and sure enough, late in the evening, while taking a stroll up the river, we met the old gentleman coming home, and after a little coquetry on the subject, he produced *the* salmon, wrapped up in a snuffy pocket handkerchief, and crammed into his trousers, where he carried it in order to avoid notoriety on the subject. Not having permission, I fancy, to kill salmon in the river, he had killed the fish with a worm late in the evening, after everything else had failed.

CHARLES ST. JOHN
from A TOUR IN SUTHERLANDSHIRE

London Methods

I HAVE been much amused by seeing an elderly, placid-looking London gentleman, who was staying at Forres for the purpose of fishing in the Findhorn. This old gentleman used to arrive at the river's edge at a comfortable noon-day hour, accompanied by his lady, and a footman, splendid in blue and red, who carried camp-stools, books, fishing-tackle, and last, though not least, a most voluminous luncheon. Daily did this party make their appearance at a certain pool, and while the old gentleman, seated at his ease on his camp-stool close to the water, with spectacles and broad-brimmed hat, fished away with the well-known perseverance and skill of a Thames angler, his lady read her book on one side, whilst on the other the red-legged footman either prepared

the luncheon, or held in readiness the well-stocked fly-book of his master. Very different would be the description given of our Scotch fishing by one who thus practised the gentle craft of angling on the level grassy banks of the lower pools of the Findhorn, to that of the sportsman, who followed up the pursuit of the salmon over the rugged, and often dangerous, passes of the rocks which overhang the deep black pools and rushing torrents of the same water between Dulsie Bridge and the Heronry.

CHARLES ST. JOHN
from A TOUR IN SUTHERLANDSHIRE

Theocritus in Scots

THE FISHERS (IDYLL XXI)

'Tis poortith sooples heid and hand
And gars inventions fill the land;
And dreams come fast to folk that lie
Wi' nocht atween them and the sky.

Twae collier lads frae near Lasswade,
Auld skeely fishers, fand their bed
Ae simmer's nicht aside the shaw
Whaur Manor rins by Cademuir Law,
Dry flowe-moss made them pillows fine,
And, for a bield to kep the win',
A muckle craig owerhung the burn,
A' thacked wi' blaeberry and fern.
Aside them lay their rods and reels,
Their flee-books and their auncient creels,
The pooches o' their moleskin breeks
Contained unlawfu' things like cleeks,
For folk that fish to fill their wame
Are no fasteedious at the game.
The twae aye took their jaunts thegither;
Geordie was ane and Tam the ither.
Their chaumer was the mune-bricht sky,
The siller stream their lullaby.

When knocks in touns were chappin' three,
Tam woke and rubbed a blinkin' e'e.
It was the 'oor when troots are boun'
To gulp the May-flee floatin' doun,
Afore the sun is in the glens
And dim are a' the heughs and dens.

Tam:

'Short is the simmer's daurk, they say,
But this ane seems as lang's the day;
For siccan dreams as passed my sicht
I never saw in Janwar nicht.
If some auld prophet chiel were here
I wad hae curious things to speir.'

Geordie:

'It's conscience gars the nichtmares rin,
Sae Tam, my lad, what hae ye dune?'

Tam:

'Nae ill; my saul is free frae blame,
Nor hae I wrocht ower hard my wame,
For last I fed, as ye maun awn,
On a sma' troot and pease-meal scone.
But hear my dreams, for aiblins you
May find a way to riddle't true . . .

'I thocht that I was castin' steady
At the pule's tail ayont the smiddy,
Wi' finest gut and sma'est flee,
For the air was clear and the water wee;
When sudden wi' a rowst and swish
I rase a maist enormous fish . . .
I struck and heuked the monster shure.
Guidsakes! to see him loup in air!
It was nae saumon, na, nor troot;
To the last yaird my line gaed oot,
As up the stream the warlock ran

As wild as Job's Leviathan.
I got him stopped below the linn,
Whaur verra near I tumbled in,
Aye prayin' hard my heuk wad haud;
And syne he turned a dorty jaud,
Sulkin' far doun amang the stanes.
I tapped the butt to stir his banes.
He warsled here and plowtered there,
But still I held him ticht and fair,
The water rinnin' oexter-hie,
The sweat aye drippin' in my e'e.
Sae bit by bit I wysed him richt
And broke his stieve and fashious nicht
Til sair fordome he cam to book
And walloped in a shallow crook.
I had nae gad, sae doun my wand
I flang and pinned him on the sand.
I clauched him in baith arms and peched
Ashore—he was a mighty wecht;
Nor stopped till I had got him sure
Amang the threshes on the muir.

'Then, Geordie lad, my een I rowed:
The beast was made o' solid gowd!—
Sic ferlie as was never kenned,
A' glitterin' gowd frae end to end!
I lauched, I grat, my kep I flang,
I danced a step, I sang a sang,
And syne I wished that I nicht dee
If wark again was touched by me ...
Wi' that I woke; nae fish was there—
Juist the burnside and empty muir.
Noo tell me honest, Geordie lad,
Think ye yon daftlike aith will haud?'

Geordie:

'Tuts, Tam, ye fule, the aith ye sware
Was like your fish, nae less, nae mair.

For dreams are nocht but simmer rouk,
And him that trusts them hunts the gouk . . .
It's time we catched some fish o' flesh
Or we will baith gang brekfastless.'

JOHN BUCHAN

The Angler's Song

AS inward love breeds outward talk,
The hound some praise, and some the hawk,
Some, better pleas'd with private sport,
Use tennis, some a mistress court:
 But these delights I neither wish,
 Nor envy, while I freely fish.

Who hunts, doth oft in danger ride;
Who hawks, lures oft both far and wide:
Who uses games shall often prove
A loser; but who falls in love,
 Is fetter'd in fond Cupid's snare:
 My angle breeds me no such care.

Of recreation there is none
So free as fishing is alone;
All other pastimes do no less
Than mind and body both possess:
 My hand alone my work can do,
 So I can fish and study too.

I care not, I, to fish in seas,
Fresh rivers best my mind do please,
Whose sweet calm course I contemplate,
And seek in life to imitate:
 In civil bounds I fain would keep,
 And for my past offences weep.

And when the timorous Trout I wait
To take, and he devours my bait,

How poor a thing, sometimes I find,
Will captivate a greedy mind:
And when none bite, I praise the wise
Whom vain allurements ne'er surprise.

But yet, though while I fish, I fast,
I make good fortune my repast;
And thereunto my friend invite,
In whom I more than that delight:
Who is more welcome to my dish
Than to my angle was my fish.

As well content no prize to take,
As use of taken prize to make:
For so our Lord was pleased, when
He fishers made fishers of men;
Where, which is in no other game,
A man may fish and praise his name.

The first men that our Saviour dear
Did choose to wait upon him here,
Blest fishers were, and fish the last
Food was that he on earth did taste:
I therefore strive to follow those
Whom he to follow him hath chose.

WILLIAM BASSE

The Reverend Fisherman

AS AN angler, the Rev. Green Vernon is distinguished more by enthusiasm than by cleverness, but he is a capital angling companion when you know him so intimately that you can speak your mind as plainly as circumstances render necessary. In other words the reverend fisherman wants rousing occasionally into an atmosphere of common sense. His line somehow has a provokingly natural tendency to foul mine; the splashing of his bait is enough

to scare away all the fish in the river; if there is a possibility of upsetting the bait-can, or treading upon the coils of his or my line, or snapping the top-joint in a tree or bush, he is the man to take the utmost advantage of the situation. But he fishes courageously right through the winter, never flinching from rain, snow, wind or frost, so long as there is a chance of sport; he is, in a word, one of those peculiarly endowed natures that will turn to angling as surely as the needle turns towards the Pole.

I know he, like myself, reads the *Field* every Sunday morning before service, at least that department which concerns angling, and once he preached a sermon upon the miraculous draught of fishes. It was a marvel of piscatorial research, with a spiritual 'tag' attached for the sake of appearances. He had ransacked the British Museum for information respecting the Sea of Galilee, and after numerous consultations with me over a pipe, produced to his puzzled parishioners a list and technical description of the fishes known or supposed to swim in that historic lake. These he rolled off his tongue with all their Latin nomenclatures, and his final conclusion was that the fish which broke the apostles' net was of the bream family, though, as he carefully explained, not precisely the same kind of bream as that caught in this neighbourhood.

WILLIAM SENIOR
from BY STREAM AND SEA

The Bait

COME liue with me and be my loue,
And we will some new pleasure proue
Of golden sands and cristall brooks,
With silken lines and siluer hooks.

There will the riuer whisperinge runne
Warm'd by thine eyes more then the sunne;
And there th' enamored fish will stay,
Begginge themselves they may betray.

When thou wilt swimme in that liue bath,
Each fish, which euery channell hath

Will amorously to thee swimme,
Gladder to catch thee then thou him.

If thou to be so seen beest loath
By sunne or moone, thou darknest both;
And if myselfe haue leave to see,
I need not their light, hauing thee.

Let others freeze with anglinge reeds,
And cutt their leggs with shells and weeds,
Or treacherously poore fish besett
With stranglinge snare or windinge nett:

Let course bold hands from slimy nest
The bedded fish in bancks outwrest,
Or curious traitors, sleaue-silk flies,
Bewitch poore fishes' wanderinge eyes.

For thee, thou needst no such deceit,
For thou thyself art thine owne bait:
That fish that is not catchd thereby,
Alas, is wiser farr than I!

JOHN DONNE

A Drink Like Nectar

'AND BEING set down, I will requite a part of your courtesies with a bottle of sack, milk, oranges, and sugar, which, all put together, make a drink like nectar: indeed, too good for any but us Anglers.'

IZAACK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

'I Could There Sit Quietly'

'... THAT VERY hour which you were absent from me, I sat down under a willow-tree by the water-side, and considered what you had told me of the owner of that pleasant meadow in which you then left me; that he had a plentiful estate, and not a heart to

think so; that he had at this time many lawsuits depending; and that they both damped his mirth, and took up so much of his time and thoughts, that he himself had not leisure to take the sweet content that I, who pretended no title to them, took in his fields: for I could there sit quietly; and looking on the water, see some fishes sport themselves in the silver streams, others leaping at flies of several shapes and colours; looking on the hills, I could behold them spotted with woods and groves; looking down the meadows, could see, here a boy gathering lilies and lady-smocks, and there a girl cropping culverkeys and cowslips, all to make garlands suitable to this present month of May.'

IZAACK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

'An Honest Alehouse'

Piscator: 'Look` you, Sir, there is a trial of my skill; there he is: that very Chub, that I showed you, with the white spot on his tail. And I'll be as certain to make him a good dish of meat as I was to catch him: I'll now lead you to an honest alehouse, where we shall find a cleanly room, lavender in the windows, and twenty ballads stuck about the wall. There my hostess, which I may tell you is both cleanly, and handsome, and civil, hath dressed many a one for me; and shall now dress it after my fashion, and I warrant it good meat.'

IZAACK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

Meddling

SAYS John, nodding solemn, "There's men and there's men,
And there's some keeps their minds on the latch;
But if ever you pines for to fish down deep,
It's got to be done when you're half asleep,
And with tackle and hook to match.
And I warn you, James, when you gets a bite,
It's turrible things you'll catch;

Fishes with goggle eyes, fishes with wings,
Fishes with beards and electric stings,
Shapeless, elastic and jellified things,
No Christian could despatch! . . .

WALTER DE LA MARE
from STUFF AND NONSENSE

'A Very Good Quality in a Man'

'I HEAR what you are talking about,' said the wife. 'But you will make no impression on Humphrey. As long as the fish rise to his bait, everybody is what he ought to be. Bless you, Casaubon has got a trout stream, and does not care about fishing in it himself: could there be a better fellow?'

'Well, there is something in that,' said the Rector, with his quiet, inward laugh. 'It is a very good quality in a man to have a trout-stream.'

GEORGE ELIOT
from MIDDLEMARCH

Sambre Fishermen

IT WAS a fine, green, fat landscape; or rather a mere green water-lane, going on from village to village. Things had a settled look, as in places long lived in. Crop-headed children spat upon us from the bridges as we went below, with a true conservative feeling. But even more conservative were the fishermen, intent upon their floats, who let us go by without one glance. They perched upon sterlings and buttresses and along the slope of the embankment, gently occupied. They were indifferent like pieces of dead nature. They did not move any more than if they had been fishing in an old Dutch print. The leaves fluttered, the water lapped, but they continued in one stay like so many churches established by law. You might have trepanned every one of their innocent heads, and found no more than so much coiled fishing line below their skulls. I do not care for your stalwart fellows in india-rubber stockings breasting up mountain torrents with a salmon rod; but I do dearly love the class of man who plies his unfruitful art, for ever and a day, by still and depopulated waters.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
from AN INLAND VOYAGE

On the Willebroek Canal

BESIDES THE cattle, we saw no living things except a few birds and a great many fishermen. They sat along the edges of the meadows, sometimes with one rod, sometimes with as many as half a score. They seemed stupified with contentment; and when we induced them to exchange a few words with us about the weather, their voices sounded quiet and far-away. There was a strange diversity of opinion among them as to the kind of fish for which they set their lures; although they were all agreed in this, that the river was abundantly supplied. Where it was plain that no two of them had ever caught the same kind of fish, we could not help suspecting that perhaps not any one of them had ever caught a fish at all. I hope, since the afternoon was so lovely, that they were one and all rewarded; and that a silver booty went home in every basket for the pot. Some of my friends would cry shame on me for this; but I prefer a man, were he only an angler, to the bravest pair of gills in all God's waters. I do not affect fishes unless when cooked in sauce; whereas an angler is an important piece of river scenery, and hence deserves some recognition among canoeists. He can always tell you where you are after a mild fashion; and his quiet presence serves to accentuate the solitude and stillness, and remind you of the glittering citizens below your boat.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
from AN INLAND VOYAGE

The Fly Fisher's Train

THE Fisherman's train leaving Waterloo Station
Runs down by the Southern on Fridays at five,
Depositing each at his own destination
Some little time after it's due to arrive.
You'll see on the platform men eager for leisure
From sick-room and counting-house, office and court,
Who carry no gear, for it's waiting their pleasure
In many delectable valleys of sport.

Whether sunshine or rain, non compos or sane,
Never let me be late for the five-o'clock train!

And one of our number, who makes it a hobby,
Is frequently seen to be running it fine,
As he streaks through the gate as if chased by a Bobby,
And leaps on the footboard at Four fifty-nine.
Then down through the pines and the birches of Surrey
With anecdote, jest, and irrelevant talk,
Till we get beyond Fleet with no effort to hurry,
And open the opulent curves of the chalk.
 Again and again, in eternal refrain,
 Rumble-dumbledy-dump goes the five-o'clock train.

For this is the train to the Test and the Itchen,
The Anton, the Avon, and how many more?
And it follows these streams from the veriest ditch in
Which, ever so small, there are fishes galore.
For where beyond Hurstbourne the viaduct carries
Us high and above 'Where the Bright Waters Meet'
For an instant we view in that valley of fairies
The junction of rivulets under our feet—
 Scarcely more than a drain, where great fishes were slain;
 There is much to be seen from the five-o'clock train.

As we drop the good fellows our party grows thinner:
We hear their last words as they bid us 'Adieu'—
'Keep a table for us at the second-course dinner
By the up train on Sunday at eight twenty-two.'
And when at the last I'm too old to go fishing,
And live in the past, I shall never complain
Of my fate if I sometimes can wave to them wishing—
'Tight lines to the men on the five-o'clock train!'
 For while life shall remain I shall always retain
 A soft place in my heart for the five-o'clock train.

E. A. BARTON
from COUNTRY LIFE

'Fisherman Billy'

HIS FAVOURITE story is of the enthusiastic fisherman and the great pike which was supposed to have its home in the river above the weir. . . . One day Old Billy was rowing the boat with two fisher-

men in it who had made up their minds to catch the big one. The weather was just right; the baits were all that could be wished; all things were favourable. As the boat approached the monster's haunt all hearts beat more quickly, and when, just in the right place, one of the rods bent to a heavy weight, the excitement was intense.

Backwards and forwards across the river sagged the fish, fighting with great power, though not with the dash of a salmon, and all three were convinced that they had got him at last. Old Billy is of opinion that it was some hours before they got the enemy up to the boat, but that is probably an exaggeration. Up to the boat they got it eventually, however, and even then it could not be seen, nor could the angler force it to the surface. Old Billy fortunately had his biggest landing-net, a monstrous thing four feet in diameter, with a long pole as handle, and he determined to try and scoop the fish out. To his joy he succeeded in netting it, and then the united efforts of the three were brought to bear, and they lifted out—an enormous fish kettle. The utensil had been caught in the handle by one of the triangles, and had naturally offered great resistance to the rod, swinging from side to side in the most life-like way. . . . Even Old Billy was deceived, he admits, and he even went so far as to look for the fish inside the kettle, but it was not there.

H. T. SHERINGHAM
from AN ANGLER'S HOURS

The Bridge Habit

THE BRIDGE-HABIT comes as easily to and sits as gracefully upon the angler as the oldest inhabitant. Indeed, unless he is at times given to meditating upon bridges, I doubt if he is a true angler at all. In Somersetshire they know how to build bridges, with well-dispositioned parapets, neither so high that one cannot lean upon them in comfort and see into the pool below, nor so low that one is in danger of falling over on a dark night. One of the reasons why the angler almost always leans over a bridge, if there is one, is that the said bridge generally gives shelter to the largest trout in the neighbourhood. If he is a well-known trout, & respected by

the inhabitants, he may be seen lying a foot or so below the bridge waiting for the worms which are thrown to him from time to time by his admirers. There is a bridge over another river, the midland Lambourn, below which are half-a-dozen trout constantly in waiting for pellets of bread, and I have there seen as many stalwart anglers, each with his slice of bread, solemnly making votive offerings.

H. T. SHERINGHAM
from AN ANGLER'S HOURS

The Tackle Shop

ABOUT THE middle of April you will often see a contemplative person standing with his back to the busy throng, and his face to a fishing-tackle shop. If you are in a gloomy mood you may moralise at sight of him on the vanity of human wishes, and picture to yourself the horrid gnawing at the soul of the man, the regret for the holidays in past years never to be enjoyed again; but if, on the other hand, you are cheerful and pleased with the world, you may look on him as a pretty picture of pleasant indecision, merely perplexed as to whether the bushes are going to be as deadly to flies this year as they were last. I believe this cheerful view is the right one to take, for if he cannot get a holiday your angler becomes morose and avoids tackle-shops and all that may remind him of what he is losing.

H. T. SHERINGHAM
from AN ANGLER'S HOURS

Bad Form in Fishing

THE FIRST article of conduct for the gentlemanly angler is belief in the statements of others. Conversely, the most shocking piece of bad form of which a fisherman can be guilty is the exhibition (whether open or partially dissembled) of doubt. . . .

This species of bad form has endless varieties. One knows, for instance, the intolerable scoundrel who, on some Hampshire river insists on seeing the two-and-a-half-pounder which you tell him

you have in your creel, and then produces his false steelyard and demonstrates to his own complete satisfaction that the fish weighs no more than seventeen ounces, is indeed, but barely takeable. Such men are only fit to stand behind a counter and serve out sugar and prunes; or, if they must go fishing, let them angle for mackerel with a seine and then hawk the carcase round their native slums on a barrow.

There is also the scourge of the hotel smoking-room, who, in response to some impressive statement of fact which one has made, raises his eyebrows, passes his hand gently over his mouth and chin, and faintly coughs. He is generally a schoolmaster, and at heart he is a gudgeon-killer. His companion, with whom he exchanges a glance of the basest significance, is a doctor who dubs (isn't it?) for eels by night with a ball of worms and worsted.

WILLIAM CAINE

from FISH, FISHING AND FISHERMEN

The First Mayfly

I WAS casting into a pool in a Hampshire stream. 'See! see!' someone behind me exclaimed. I turned; and there, in his shirt sleeves, was the landlord of the little inn at which I was staying. With outstretched arm he was pointing to something in the blue air athwart the copse bordering the water, and his eyes were gleaming with some sudden joy. I looked towards where he pointed. It was the first Mayfly of the year that had moved him. The innkeeper was a reserved, shy man, who at ordinary times could scarcely be induced to talk at all; but that fluttering Mayfly, symbol of summer at the noon and all the green world at the freshest intensity of throbbing life, had stirred him to a panic happiness.

W. EARL HODGSON

from TROUT FISHING

Cockney Fishermen

Haleius: . . . since I have been a fly-fisher, I have rarely fished in the sea, and then only with a reel and fine tackle from the rocks, which is at least as interesting an amusement as that of the Cockney fishermen, who fish for roach and dace in the Thames, which I have tried twice in my life, but shall never try again.

Physicus: You are severe on Cockney fishermen, and, I suppose, would apply to *them only*, the observation of Dr. Johnson, which on a former occasion you would not allow to be just: 'Angling is an amusement with a stick and a string; a worm at one end and a fool at the other.' And to yourself you would apply it with this change: 'A fly at one end, and a philosopher at the other.' Yet the pleasure of the Cockney angler appears to me of much the same kind, and perhaps more continuous than yours; and he has the happiness of constant occupation and perpetual pursuit in as high a degree as you have; and if we were to look at the real foundations of your pleasure, we should find them, like most of the foundations of human happiness—vanity or folly.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY
from SALMONIA

One in a Hundred

ALMOST EVERYONE now-a-days is a '*piscator*.' The *Fanatico*, about Easter, goes off as busy as the Cockney on his *nunter*, when bound to Epping. He generally takes a great many things, and kills a few fish. The old angler takes a few things, and kills a great many fish. Some dark, warm, windy, drizzly days, early or late in the season, and particularly when a fine breeze blows from off the banks of a river, where no one has begun fishing, the trout are so easily taken, that a basket full is but little proof of skill. One might then almost train a monkey to catch a trout. But, at other times, and particularly when fish are well fed, is the time to see who is, and who is not, an angler. About ninety in a hundred fancy themselves anglers. About one in a hundred *is* an angler.

LT.-COL. PETER HAWKER
from INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUNG SPORTSMEN

The Weather Prophet

BILL IS a professional fisherman, living in the cottage and fishing the river, where his father lived and fished before him. Something over fifty and under sixty, Bill remains sturdy as oak and tough as hickory. He throws a fly, casts a bait and manages a boat—all with the touch of a master. Bill loves fish, fishing and fishermen, and (though he doesn't know it) the river is his god and himself the high priest. Incidentally, Bill is a remarkable weather prophet: he owns no barometer, and (to quote his own words) 'takes no account of the glass, and don't hold with them forecasts'; but he has lived always in the open air, his keen eyes are ever on duty, and he puts two and two together as well as any man. Recently we fished together for a short month, and it has interested me to learn some of the queer signs on which he bases his weather prophecies. After two days of storm and unfishable water the morning broke calm and sunny: a clear sky and a rising glass brought hope to one's angling soul. But Bill would have none of it: 'It's a fox, sir, right enough; the early sun was all brassy; 'twill rain again before night.' Sure enough we staggered home at five o'clock in oilskins and a tearing gale. How to diagnose a 'brassy' sun is still beyond me, nor have I learned the pathognomonic signs of a 'foxy' morning, but Bill was right, horrid right! As we fought home through the rain, he pointed out another warning. In a mass of dark cloud came a sudden break, through which a gleam of rainbow colouring showed like a bright 'eye' in its sombre background. For a few moments it shone, then filmed, and was gone. 'That, sir, is what we call a "cock's eye," a sure sign of storms. A wicked old sailor first showed me one, when I were a youngster, and I mind his very words: "Cock's eyes means drowned men, boy, and time to get down on your knees to pray for the pore b——y sailors on the sea." ' And Bill, his wicked sailor and his cock's eye were right again, for it poured all that night and blew a full gale next day.

Bill usually scorns oars in favour of a 'pole.' His poles have little in common with the polished playthings of gentler streams. Monstrous of length, iron shod by the village blacksmith, and tough and knotted as himself, Bill's poles call for a strong man's

handling. One warm evening, as we landed from a day's fishing, I contentedly suggested 'another fine day to-morrow, Bill?' but he shook his head. 'I don't think it, sir; all day my pole has been that slippery I could scarce keep it in my hands, and that means wet.' Sure enough next morning brought torrents of rain. Bill was right once more. To my untutored senses his rough pole and horny hands alike seem incapable of slipperiness, but there it is! Just another of nature's little mysteries!

Bill watches the clouds. He does not know the terms 'cirrus' or 'cumulus,' but sets great store by height and shape, and always mistrusts hard edges. Long, soft, rounded sausages like white airships fill him with dismay, and he hates rows of innocent-looking little 'wispy' clouds one had sometimes adored. He calls them 'messengers' of bad weather, and they certainly heralded it more than once in our month.

Bill is not an artist in the ordinary acceptation of the word, but his colour sense is surprising. All red dawns do not mean rain to him, nor does a red sky at night always fill him with delight. There are subtle shades of red which tell him things denied to lesser mortals, and how the colour spreads and the time it persists are factors in his translation of a crimson sky.

Bill studies the sun, and differentiates a 'white' sun, a 'watery' sun and a 'brassy' sun without the aid of smoked glass. Like the skipper of the *Hesperus*, he learns from the moon, and shares his distrust of her rings, haloes and mists.

He has strong views about wind. An east wind is never a good wind, but he smiles on any breeze from the south. He preaches a gospel of orderly sequence, and insists that a benevolent shift of wind will always follow the hands of a clock, while a reverse shift spells trouble. A well conducted wind 'comes in,' but 'going out' is an offence in windy morals. This sounds severe, but Bill is adamant!

Like every fisherman, Bill is a close student of nature, and he correlates the behaviour of the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air with weather changes. When every one of a herd of cows is lying down in a field, a fine day is likely, while the 'tumbling' of rooks suggests wet. When the duck 'bunch' in the reeds, Bill hints at coming rain, and the whistle of curlews at certain hours is

ominous. Within three miles of his cottage there are two church clocks and a main line railway. I have known Bill forecast rain (and correctly, too) from some subtle difference in their familiar sounds.

Here is a delightful 'weatherism' he first taught me. On a certain fine morning clouds gathered and rain started, and I, poor ignorant soul, almost wept in fear of a wet day. Bill took a look round and summed up thus: 'No, sir, its naught but the pride of the morning.' Sure enough within twenty minutes the rain ceased, the clouds melted, and a sunny day followed. Now, what *is* the 'pride of the morning?' and how *could* he tell? I asked him, and he couldn't, and there you are!

Bill does not claim omniscience, and sometimes makes mistakes. Like other wise men, he will not always commit himself, and is not ashamed to say 'I cannot tell.' He is a confessed empiricist, though I dare bet he has never heard the word. His knowledge is partly inherited and largely acquired, and he is not concerned with how or why! But, taken by and large, I have yet to meet his equal as a weather prophet.

"L. S."

from COUNTRY LIFE

Angling Ways and Means

‘Like the Mathematics’

FOR Angling may be said to be like the Mathematics, that can never be fully learnt; at least, not so fully, but that there will still be more new experiments left for the trial of other men that succeed us.

IZAACK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

The Colouring of Lines

‘TAKE A pottle of Allom-water, and put thereunto a great handful of Marigolds, let them boil well, till a yellow scum rise upon the water, then take half a pound of green Copperas, And as much Verdigrease, beaten to a fine powder, and put it with the hair into the water, and so let it boyle again a pretty space, and then set it by to cool for half a day, then take out your hair, and lay it where it may dry, and you shall see it of a delicate green colour which indeed is the best water-green that may be.’

GERVASE MARKHAM

from COUNTRY CONTENTMENTS

The Angler’s Apparel

‘LET THEN your apparel be plain and comely; of a dark colour, as Russet, Tawny, or such like, close to your body, without any new fashioned flashes, or hanging sleeves, waving loose, like sails about you, for they are like blinks, which will ever chase your game from you: let it for your own health and ease sake be warm and well-lined, that neither the coldness of the Ayr, nor the moistness of the Water may offend you: keep your head and feet dry, for from the offence of them springeth Agues, and worse infirmities.’

GERVASE MARKHAM

from COUNTRY CONTENTMENTS

Garments of Russet or Gray

AND let your garments russet be or gray
Of colour dark and hardest to descry,
That with the rain or weather will away,
And least offend the fearful fish's eye:
For neither scarlet nor rich cloth of 'ray
Nor colours dipt in fresh Assyrian dye,
Nor tender silks of purple, paul or gold
Will serve so well to keep off wet or cold.

In this array the Angler good shall go
Unto the brook to find his wished game;
Like old Menalcus wandering to and fro
Until he chance to light upon the same;
And here his art and cunning shall bestow
For every fish his bait so well to frame,
That long ere Phoebus set in western foam
He shall return well laden to his home.

JOHN DENNYS

from THE SECRETS OF ANGLING

'A Fish of Stubborne Sway'

NOW as an *Angler*, melancholy standing,
Upon a greene bancke yeelding room for landing,
A wrigling yealow worme thrust on his hooke
Now in the midst he throws, then in a nooke;
Here puls his line, there throwes it in again,
Mendeth his Corke and Bait, but all in vaine,
He long stands viewing of the curled streame;
At last a hungry *Pike*, or well-growne *Bream*,
Snatch at the worm, and hasting fast away,
He, knowing it a Fish of stubborne sway,
Puls up his rod, but soft, (as having skill);
Then all his line he freely yeeldeth him,
Whilst furiously all up and downe doth swimme
Th' insnared Fish, here on the toppe doth send,

There underneath the banckes, then in the mud;
 And with his franticke fits so scares the shole,
 That each one takes his *hyde* or starting hole;
 By this the *Pike* cleane wearied, underneath
 A *Willow* lyes, and pants (if Fishes breath),
 Wherewith the *Angler* gently puls to him;
 And least his hast might happen to undoe him
 Lays down his rod, then takes his line in hand,
 And by degrees getting the Fish to land,
 Walkes to another Poole, at length is winner
 Of such a dish as serves him for his dinner.

WILLIAM BROWNE
from BRITANNIA'S PASTORAL

Divers Methods

PORD NETTERS are a class of poachers not generally known. What is called the pord net consists of two staves shod with iron, to which is fastened a net. In quick running stony waters it is used with great effect. The poachers wade a shallow stream, drive the trout to their *holds*, and placing the staves so as to bring the net round a stone or hold of any kind, they are said to *pord*, *prod*, or *poke* the points underneath, till they are forced to come out and strike into the net. Carp are driven into their hordes, under the sides, where, with a semicircular net, they are taken, by puddling them till they fly into it. Some have been taken, after first being collected into one place, by feeding with new grains and blood; by intoxication, with crummy bread squeezed on a stone, impregnated with coculus indicus, and oil of asp. They will come up, and you may take them with a landing-net, but a casting-net is much better. In June, carp and tench are very busy roding, when you may feed them into the shallow waters, and take them with a casting-net, and stock your stews for the year. Always let the net lie till the fish rise, as carp strike into the mud, if there is any, but cannot remain there long, as it makes them sick. When you drag a pond, have two drags, one about three yards behind the other, as the fish will strike the mud, and let the lead-line slip

over them; when, thinking they are safe, they precipitate themselves into the other net. For tench, you may let flews stand with a brass candlestick on each side, a yard distant, on a float: they will fly from one to another.

JOHN MAYER, GAMEKEEPER
from THE SPORTSMAN'S DIRECTORY

Eels and Wild Ducks

FOR EELS and wild ducks, put hooks upon warp or line, about a foot apart, and the same length to each hook; put a gudgeon on one hook, and a piece of lights on the other all the way: lay it across the shallow waters. The lights will swim, which the ducks will take, and the eels will take the gudgeons; so, when you draw the line out, you will have a duck on one hook, and an eel on the other. This you will find to be excellent sport.

JOHN MAYER, GAMEKEEPER
from THE SPORTSMAN'S DIRECTORY

'A More Delusive Art'

WHEN floating Clouds their spongy Fleeces drain,
Troubling the Streams with swift-descending Rain,
And Waters, tumbling down the Mountain's side,
Bear the loose Soil into the swelling Tide;
Then, soon as Vernal Gales begin to rise,
And drive the liquid Burthen through the Skies,
The Fisher strait his Taper Rod prepares,
And to the neighbouring Stream in haste repairs;
Upon a rising Bordér of the Brook
He sits him down, and ties the treach'rous Hook;
A twining Earth-worm he draws on with Care,
With which he neatly hides the pointed Snare.
Now Expectation chears his eager Thought,
His Bosom glows with Treasures yet uncaught,
Before his Eyes a Banquet seems to stand,
The kind Effects of his industrious Hand.

But when the Sun displays his glorious Beams
 And falling Rivers flow with Silver Streams,
 When no moist Clouds the radiant Air invest,
 And *Flora* in her richest state is drest,
 Then the disporting Fish the Cheat survey,
 Bask in the Sun, and look into the Day.
 You now a more delusive Art must try,
 And tempt their hunger with the Curious Fly;
 Your wary steps must not advance too near,
 Whilst all your Hope hangs on a single Hair;
 Upon the curling Surface let it glide,
 With Nat'ral Motion from thy Hand supply'd;
 Against the Stream now let it gently play,
 Now in the rapid Eddy roll away;
 The sporting Fish leaps at the floating Bait,
 And in the dainty Morsel seeks his Fate.

To frame the little Animal, provide
 All the gay Hues that wait on Female Pride,
 Let Nature guide thee; sometimes Golden Wire
 The glitt'ring Bellies of the Fly require;
 The Peacock's Plumes thy Tackle must not fail,
 Nor the dear Purchase of the Sable's Tail.
 Each gaudy Bird some slender Tribute brings,
 And lends the growing Insect proper Wings,
 Silks of all Colours must their Aid impart,
 And ev'ry Fur promote the Fisher's Art.
 So the gay Lady, with Expensive Care,
 Borrows the Pride of Land, of Sea, and Air;
 Furs, Pearls and Plumes, the painted Thing displays,
 Dazles our Eyes, and easie Hearts betrays.

Mark well the various Seasons of the Year,
 How the succeeding Insect Race appear;
 In this revolving Moon one Colour reigns,
 Which in the next the fickle Trout disdains.
 Oft' have I seen a skilful Angler try
 The various Colours of the treach'rous Fly;

When he with fruitless Pain hath skim'd the Brook,
And the coy Fish rejects the skipping Hook,
He shakes the Boughs that on the Margin grow,
Which o'er the Streams a waving Forrest throw;
When if an Insect falls (his certain Guide)
He gently takes him from the whirling Tide;
Examines well his Form with curious Eyes,
His gaudy Colours, Wings, his Horns and Size,
Then round his Hook a proper Fur he winds,
And on the back a speckled Feather binds,
So just the Properties in ev'ry part,
That even Nature's Hand revives in Art.
His new-form'd Creature on the Water moves,
The roving Trout th' inviting Snare approves,
Upon his Skill successful Sport attends,
The Rod, with the succeeding Burthen, bends;
The Fishes sail along, and in Surprise
Behold their Fellows drawn into the Skies;
When soon they rashly seize the deadly Bait,
And Lux'ry draws them to their Fellows' Fate.

JOHN GAY
from RURAL SPORTS

How the Wolf went A-fishing

'NOT LONG since,' said Sir Isegrim, 'this smiling but bitter-hearted traitor (Reynard the Fox) persuaded my wife that he would teach her how to catch fish—as many as she pleased. It was one cold winter's morning, and having first made a hole in the ice he told her that if she would let her tail hang in the water a good while numbers of fish would come and seize hold of it when she might easily pull them upon land. This the simple fool did, and stood there so long that her tail was frozen hard to the ice, so that all the force she had was not able to pull it out. Well might she shriek, cry, and feed upon the brine of her own tears, but all to no purpose had I not providentially been passing near. So I went unto her with much sorrow and heaviness, having a

world of labour ere I could break the ice about her, and in despite of all my cunning yet she was compelled to leave a piece of her tail behind her; and indeed we both escaped hardly with our lives. For by reason of her great anguish she barked so loud that the people of the next village rose up and so fiercely assaulted us that I was never in so desperate a taking.'

from REYNARD THE FOX (ROSCOE'S TRANSLATION)

'Neither Hook nor Line'

you see the ways the fisherman doth take
To catch the fish; what engines doth he make?
Behold! how he engageth all his wits;
Also his snares, lines, angles, hooks and nets;
Yet fish there be, that neither hook nor line,
Nor snare, nor net, nor engine, can make thine:
They must be groped for, and be tickled too,
Or they will not be catch'd, whate'er you do.

JOHN BUNYAN

'You that fish for Dace and Roches'

you that fish for dace and roches,
Carps or tenches, bonus noches,
Thou wast born betweene two dishes,
When the Fryday signe was fishes.
Anglers' yeares are made and spent,
All in Ember weekes and Lent.
Break thy rod about thy noddle,
Throw thy worms and flies by the pottle,
Keep thy cork to stop thy bottle,
Make straight thy hooke and be not afraid
To shave his beard;
That in case of started stitches
Hooke and line may mend thy breeches.

He that searches pools and dikes,
Halters jackes and strangles pikes,

Let him know, though he think he wise is,
'Tis not a sport but an assizes.
Fish to hooke, were the case disputed,
Are not tooke but executed.
Breake thy rod, etc.

But of all men he is the cheater,
Who with small fish takes up the greater,
He makes carpes without all dudgeon,
Makes a Jonas of a gudgeon,
Cruell man that stays on gravell,
Fish that great with fish doth travell.
Breake thy rod, etc.

from LLEWELLYN'S NEW MIRACLES

The Angler's Hours

FROM first appearing of the rising sun
Till nine of clock, low under water best,
The fish will bite; and then from nine to noon,
From noon to four they do refrain and rest:
From four again till Phoebus swift hath run
His daily course, and setteth in the west.

But at the fly aloft they use to bite,
All summer long, from nine till it be night.

JOHN DENNYS

Fresh-run

Shepherd: I was just wattin my flee near the edge, when a new-run fish, strong as a white horse, rushed at it, and then out o' the water wi' a spang higher than my head,

'My heart to my mouth gied a sten,'

and he had amaist rugged the rod out of my nieve, but I sune recovered my presence o' mind, and after indulgin' his royal highness in a few plunges, I gied him the butt, and for a quarter o' an hour kept his nose to the grunstone. It's a sair pity to see a

sawmon sulky and I thocht—and nae doubt sae did he—that he had taen up his lodgins at the bottom o' a pool for the nicht—though the sun had just reached his meridian. The plump o' a stane half a hunderwecht made him shift his quarters—and a sudden thocht struck him that he would mak' the best o' his way to the Tweed, and then down the sea at Berwick. But I bore sae hard on him wi' an auchteen-foot rod, that by the time he had swam twa miles—and a' that time, though I aften saw his shadow, I seldom saw himsel—he was sae sair blawn that he cam to the surface o' his ain accord, as if to tak breath—and after that I had it a' my ain way—for he was powerless as a sheaf o' corn carried down in a spate—and I landed him at the fuird, within a few hunder yards o' Altrive.

CHRISTOPHER NORTH
from NOCTES AMBROSIANAE

Your First Salmon

SUPPOSE YOURSELF for the moment a sportsman, or rather a Londoner beginning his first season in the Highlands. You have journeyed many miles to catch your first salmon, never having as yet caught anything beyond a trout of a pound's weight, or a jack of five or six; you reach the bank of your river; you throw the fly, selected with so much care, at first timidly and anxiously, but gradually with more and more confidence, and eventually even carelessly; at length you reach the extreme pitch of negligence; your eyes dilate as you yield to reverie; your thoughts become scattered, as you whip the waters mechanically; when suddenly a slight curl appears on the surface; a sob-like sound for a moment reaches your ear, as though some troubled watersprite had just sunk beneath the wave, and instantly an electric shock passes quickly up your line and down your rod, which at once dispels your "castles in the air," and awakens you to the reality that you have just *lost* your first salmon.

JAMES CONWAY
from FORAYS AMONG SALMON AND DEER

'Now is the Time'

NOW when the first foul torrent of the brooks,
Swell'd with the vernal rains, is ebb'd away;
And, whitening down their mossy-tinctured stream
Descends the billowy foam, now is the time,
While yet the dark-brown water aids the guile,
To tempt the trout. The well-dissembled fly,
The rod, fine-tapering with elastic spring,
Snatch'd from the hoary stud the floating line,
And all thy slender wat'ry store prepare;
But let not on thy hook the tortur'd worm
Convulsive twist in agonizing folds,
Which, by rapacious hunger swallow'd deep,
Gives, as you tear it from the bleeding breast
Of the weak, helpless, uncomplaining wretch,
Harsh pain and horror to the tender hand.

.
Just in the dubious point where with the pool
Is mixed the trembling stream, or where it boils
Around the stone, or from the hollow'd bank
Reverted plays in undulating flow,
There throw, nice judging, the delusive fly.

JAMES THOMSON
from THE SEASONS

Salmon Secrets



NE great charm of the actual fishing for salmon is found no doubt in casting right out into dark rushing water; in having to do with the full force of a strong river instead of with shallows and gentle places in small streams, as in fly fishing for trout. Each has its charm, but the unobtrusive delicacy of trout fishing is out of place in a salmon river. Angling for salmon is coarser work, but it requires skill, and the effort and surroundings are most stimulating. In spring, too, there is a great sense of mystery about the water. Fresh run

salmon do not jump at all, or show themselves much in the early part of the season. The angler may see nothing, and yet hope for everything: the number of salmon in any part of the river varies continually, and each day, as the angler watches the river, the water betrays none of its secrets; they remain hidden till his fly discovers them.

VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON
from FLY FISHING

Trolling

SOME SAY that fishing with a minnow calls for no thought; but that is a mistaken view. Who has not noticed how cunningly the experienced boatman, when you are trolling, goes about his business? Do you mark his course? It is not in a straight line that he moves: that would disturb all the trout over which, following the boat, the minnow would pass. Therefore, instead of going straight, the boatman pursues a line which is in large curves, curves such as some giant must make when he cuts the outside edge and the inside edge alternately on the same leg while skating on the ice of Lilliput. By this means, the Gillie contrives that the minnow, which is about a hundred yards off, shall cross the path of the boat only now and then, and, for the rest, be moving through water that has not been disturbed. Though simple, it is a cunning plan, showing that fishing with a minnow calls for thought.

W. EARL HODGSON
from TROUT FISHING

An Angler's Farewell

WELL! I think it is time to put up!
For it does not accord with my notions
Wrist, elbow and chine,
Stiff from throwing the line,
To take nothing at last by my motions.

I ground-bait my way as I go,
 And dip in at each watery dimple:
 But however I wish
 To inveigle the fish,
 To my *gentle* they will not play *simple*!
 Though my float goes so swimmingly on,
 My bad luck never seems to diminish;
 It would seem that the Bream
 Must be scarce in the stream,
 And the *Chub*, though it's *chubby*, be *thinnish*!
 Not a Trout there can be in the place,
 Not a Grayling or Rud worth the mention,
 And although at my hook
 With *attention* I look,
 I can ne'er see my hook with a *Tench* on!
 At a brandling once Gudgeon would gape,
 But they seem upon different terms now;
 Have they taken advice
 Of the 'Council of Nice,'
 And rejected their 'Diet of Worms' now?
 In vain my live minnow I spin,
 Not a Pike seems to think it worth snatching;
 For the gut I have brought
 I had better have bought
 A good *rope* that was used to *jack-ketching*.
 Not a nibble has ruffled my cork,
 It is vain in this river to search then;
 I may wait till it's night,
 Without any bite,
 And at roost-time have never a *Perch* then!
 No Roach can I meet with—no Bleak,
 Save what in the air is so sharp now;
 Not a Dace have I got,
 And I fear it is not
 'Carpe diem,' a day for the Carp now!

Oh! there is not a one-pound prize
To be got in the fresh-water lottery!
 What then can I deem
 Of so fishless a stream
But that 'tis—like St. Mary's—*Ottery!*

For an Eel I have learn'd how to try,
By a method of Walton's own showing,—
 But a fisherman feels
 Little prospect of Eels,
In a path that's devoted to towing!

I have tried all the water for miles,
Till I'm weary of dipping and casting,
 And hungry and faint—
 Let the Fancy just paint,
That it is, *without Fish*, to be *fasting!*

And the rain drizzles down very fast,
While my dinner-time sounds from a far bell,—
 So, wet to the skin,
 I'll e'en back to my Inn,
Where at least I am sure of a Bar-bell!

THOMAS HOOD

Fixed Ideas

NOTHING is more inimical to results than starting out on the first day with a mind full of resolutions as to how you will proceed. Ever since fishing rods were first used fixed ideas have been responsible for blank days.

W. F. R. REYNOLDS
from FLY AND MINNOW

Abstract Fishing

THERE ARE purists who pick their trout; who say they derive no satisfaction from a chance fish; who will not tackle a tailer; who are content to spend the day in the open air and take the water as it comes: generally speaking, a suitable comment on such notions

is—*fiddlesticks!* There is no such thing as indifferent fishing. Abstract fishing is not *fishing*. To cast a fly cleverly and correctly for the sake of casting is abstract fishing, but *fishing* is essentially the art of catching fish. Not only is dexterity required, there must be some knowledge as well—and results. It is only the past master who may be pretentious enough to indulge in a nonchalant study of the alighting of his fly on a bit of comparatively still water, or exult in contemplating the beauty of some parabolic curve of his three-ounce rod while a fish is being played. Such anglers, apparently, have nothing to learn, knowing the game from A to Z; fishing is easy work, and they prefer to dally with lofty technicalities—on their own waters or on waters that they know. Put them on a rough stream however, and another tale is often told. In short, there are no past masters, except on home waters. The unforeseen is the greatest charm of a day's fishing, without a doubt, and, if it be true that the purist will have none of it, as he sometimes states, then, to most minds, the thing is incredible.

W. F. R. REYNOLDS
from FLY AND MINNOW

Black Midge for Brown Lug

ONE DAY about the first of June, when fishing in a clear pool near the mouth of the river Findhorn, a large trout came out from under the bank, and darted over my fly without taking it. I changed the fly and he did the same thing. I tried him with a dozen different sorts, and he invariably played the same trick, coming out from under the bank, dashing at the fly, then turning short round or rolling over it. At last a miniature black midge in my book caught my eye, and I put it on: the moment I cast this fly over the trout he came straight at it in quite a different manner, taking it well into his mouth as if at last in earnest. He was well hooked, and then came the tug of war and the trial of patience. The fly was literally speaking a midge, made more as an experiment in fly-making than for any expected use, and it was tied on the finest gut. The trout, on finding that instead of catching a fly he was caught himself, immediately began to try every device

that a trout ever imagined to get rid of his tiny enemy. Now he was at the bottom rubbing his nose on the gravel; the next moment flying straight up into the air with the agility of a harlequin; sometimes with forty yards of line out, sometimes right under my feet; then away he went as if to run over the shallows at the end of the pool on his way to the sea, but, changing his mind, darted like an arrow up to the deepest part of the pool, and there he lay like a stone at the bottom. After a little waiting I pelted him out of that mood, and beginning myself to grow eager and desperate, (moreover having now more confidence in my midge which had already passed through a trial which a larger hook might not have stood so well), I turned his head down the stream, and began to take the game into my own hands a little more—in fact to be the active instead of the passive agent. The trout, too, began to feel weary of the contest, and to allow himself to be led about: at last I brought him to the edge, but just as the landing net was being delicately slipped under him, away he went again, and ran the line round a broken piece of bank on the opposite side. I am afraid something very like an imprecation escaped me; and if it did, I am confident that Job himself could not blame me. Just as I had quite given all up, the trout most carefully and good-naturedly turned back the way he went, undoing the line again as neatly as possible. After a little running to and fro he fairly gave in, and this time we got him safely into the landing-net, when I found that he was one of the aforesaid 'brown lugs,' weighing nearly 5 lbs.—the largest trout that I ever killed in the Findhorn, and mastered too with a fly only fit for parr of the smallest size.

CHARLES ST. JOHN
from A TOUR IN SUTHERLANDSHIRE

The Boatie Rows

I CUIST my line in Largo Bay,
And fishes I catch'd nine:
There was three to boil, and three to fry,
And three to bait the line.

The boatie rows, the boatie rows,
The boatie rows indeed!
And happy be the lot of a'
That wishes her to speed!

O weel may the boatie row
That fills a heavy creel,
And cleads us a' frae head to feet,
And buys our pottage meal!
The boatie rows, the boatie rows,
The boatie rows indeed!
And happy be the lot of a'
That wish the boatie speed.

JOHN EWEN

Cunning Fishermen

THEY (FROGS) overcover themselves by the sand, a knack used of them to beguile the little fishes, and as they come by them they step out and catch them, and so swallow them up.

JOHN MAPLET
from GREEN FORESTS

'The Breeze is on the Heron-Lake'

THE breeze is on the Heron-lake,
The May-sun shineth clear;
Away we bound through the ferny brake,
With our wands and angling gear.

The birch-wreath o'er the water edge
Scatters sweet flies about;
And around his haunt of whisp'ring sedge,
Bells up the yellow trout.

Take heed! take heed! his eye is bright
As falcon's in the sky;
But artful feather hove aright,
Will hood a keener eye.

Beware, beware the water-weed,
And the birch that weeps behind,
And gently let the true line speed
Before thee on the wind.

Oh! gently let the good line flow,
And gently wile it home:
There's many a gallant fin I trow
Under the ribbed foam.

A merry fish on a stallion hair
'Tis a pleasant thing to lead
On May-days, when the cowslip fair
Is yellowing on the mead.

When the breeze starts up, and the sun peeps out,
And grey flies two or three
Hold merry frolic round about,
Under the green-wood tree.

Oh! then the heart bounds pleasantly,
And its thoughts are pleasant things,
Gushing in joyous purity
Like mirthful water-springs.

THOMAS TOD STODDART

'A Birr! A Whirr!'

A BIRR! a whirr! the salmon's off!—
No, no, we still have got him;
The wily fish is sullen grown,
And like a bright imbedded stone,
Lies gleaming at the bottom.
Hark to the music of the reel!
'Tis hushed, it hath forsaken;
With care we'll guard the magic wheel,
Until its notes awaken.

THOMAS TOD STODDART

from THE TAKING OF THE SALMON

Before Breakfast

THE TROUT fisher's day should by all means begin at seven, or not later than a quarter past, and I hope I offend no prejudices by suggesting that a cup of tea and a slice of country bread and butter should greet the awakening. The boots should say 'Nice drop of rain last night, sir', when he brings them in, and at the same moment a gleam of sunshine should make its way into the room to show that there is no fear of the rain spoiling the day. The morning tea after rain and in the sunlight inspires the happiest imaginings as to what will come about. Many is the noble brace of trout (or round dozen of trout; it depends on the locality) that I have captured soon after seven in that blessed half-hour of prognostication.

Breakfast should be at eight, and the only communications that have come by post should be personal and of an encouraging nature. 'I do hope you will have good weather, and I should certainly stay till Wednesday, if . . .' That is the kind of tone needed to start the day. It confirms you in your opinion that you are doing the eminently right and proper thing in taking a holiday.

H. T. SHERINGHAM

from TROUT FISHING—MEMORIES AND MORALS

Killing a Pike

A ROD twelve feet long and a ring of wire,
A winder and barrel, will help thy desire
In killing a Pike; but the forked stick,
With a slit and a bladder,—and that other fine trick,
Which our artists call snap, with a goose or a duck,—
Will kill two for one, if you have any luck;
The gentry of Shropshire do merrily smile,
To see a goose and a belt the fish to beguile;
When a Pike suns himself and a-frogging doth go,
The two-inched hook is better, I know,
Than the ordinary snaring; but still I must cry,
When the Pike is at home, minde the cookery.

THOMAS BARKER

from THE ART OF ANGLING

The Wet-Fly Man

THERE ARE those who wax indignant at the use of wet fly on dry fly waters. Yet it has a special fascination. The indications which tell your dry-fly angler when to strike are clear and unmistakeable, but those which bid a wet-fly man raise his rod-point and draw in the steel are frequently so subtle, so evanescent and impalpable to the senses, that, when the landing rod assures him that he has divined aright, he feels an ecstasy as though he had performed a miracle each time.

G. E. M. SKUES

from MINOR TACTICS OF THE CHALK STREAM

'Of Courage and the Jeopardising of Tuppence Ha'penny'

THAT, MY friends, is almost the extreme price of a trout-fly. Some are less. Yet how often shall you see an angler whose equipment for the taking of trout has run into pounds, and whose railway fare and reckoning at his inn are substantial items of expenditure upon the same subject, throw away the most sporting occasions for the attainment of his end because, forsooth, he is sure to be hung up or weeded or smashed or something equally delightful—and bang would go tuppence ha'penny! I have no patience with this sort of thing. The more hopeless the prospect of getting out a trout from an impossible place, the more determined I am to try for him . . . There is no place so desperate that, with luck and management, you may not get a well-hooked trout out of it.

G. E. M. SKUES

from MINOR TACTICS OF THE CHALK STREAM

A Dry-Fly Programme

THE TROUTS which I shall catch this summer are all great fair fishes. They shall number a hundred and one and they shall weigh 250 lbs. My average shall thus be, not $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., because nobody credits these round figures, but two pounds and forty-eight one-

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hundred-and-oneths, a figure which bears on its face the stamp of very truth. . . . The greatest of my trouts shall weigh 4 lbs., for I would propose to Fortune nothing that is unimaginable, nor do I wish to overshoot my present farthest mark by any astonishing measure . . .

I shall take this fine fish under the following conditions: I shall find him on a morning in early May. He shall lie on the glide below Crab Hatch, and at first I shall take him for a small bed of weed. But as I look about for other fishes there shall come a little ring in the water and I shall catch the gleam of a great yellow side that turns in the sunlight, and I shall crouch, with my heart leaping against my ribs. Then shall I deliver a very perfect cast and he shall come up, and I shall miss him and he shall flee into the depths of the pool, and by and by I shall go on. Early May is the wrong time for the taking of great trouts—this is what I shall tell myself. ‘Not until June,’ I shall say, ‘not until June will I snare this fish.’ And on the morrow I shall be angling for him; but I shall not take him, And on the morrow, And on the morrow.

In July I shall slay him on a warm moist afternoon following a week of great failure. For a week shall the smitten valley have swum in a twinkling haze, for a week shall the wise cattle have dwelt all day beneath their elms, for a week shall the fool angler have crawled fainting beside a stream devoid of fishes. And lo, towards noon of the eighth day a change shall come, a greyness, a mitigation of the intolerable glare. High overhead the blue shall grow all laced with filmy white. The downs shall recede, the birds begin to call. Hope shall whisper, ‘there is a sound of abundance of rain.’ And near two o’clock it shall come, softly, nor shall there be any thunder. And when I shall stand beside Crab Hatch the great one shall be feeding and I shall take him at the first cast, and my soul shall sing while we battle in the heavy water of the pool.

WILLIAM CAINE

from FISH, FISHING AND FISHERMEN

Fish-dinners

‘FISH-DINNERS will make a man spring like a flea.’

THOMAS JORDAN

Sportsman's Cookery

NOW SHALL you see some real sportsman's cookery. ‘Give me half-a-dozen of those perch, Patsey, and that copy of the *Times* newspaper.’ Now observe me. Take each perch separately, merely wiping him dry—not cutting or scraping him in the least, as that would break the skin and let out his juices;—then take a piece of paper, and wet it in the lake, and roll the perch in it, in three or four folds; screw up the ends, and thrust perch, paper and all, into the embers. In from five to ten minutes your fish is cooked. Rake him out; take off the charred paper, and carefully remove his scales, which will come off *en masse*; rub the white succulent side with butter, pepper and salt, to taste; make an incision along the backbone, and flake off all the beautiful firm white flesh; turn the carcase over and serve the other side of the fish in the same way; throw away the bones and interior; and eat the remainder. It is a dish for a king, or an angler. A salmon or a big trout may be filleted and served in the same way, or roasted upon skewers.

FRANCIS FRANCIS

from A MONTH IN THE WEST 1886

Fishes

'Heaven'

FISH (fly-replete, in depth of June,
Dawdling away their wat'ry noon)
Ponder deep wisdom, dark or clear,
Each secret fishy hope or fear.
Fish say, they have their Stream & Pond;
But is their anything Beyond?
This life cannot be All, they swear,
For how unpleasant, if it were!
One may not doubt that, somehow Good
Shall come of Water & of Mud;
And, sure, the reverent eye must see
A Purpose in Liquidity.
We darkly know, by Faith we cry,
The future is not Wholly Dry.
Mud unto mud!—Death eddies near—
Not here the appointed End, not here!
But somewhere, beyond Space & Time,
Is wetter water, slimier slime!
And there (they trust) there swimmeth One
Who swam ere rivers were begun,
Immense, of fishy form & mind,
Squamous, omnipotent, & kind;
And under that Almighty Fin,
The littlest fish may enter in.
Oh! never fly conceals a hook,
Fish say, in the Eternal Brook,
But more than mundane weeds are there,
And mud, celestially fair;
Fat caterpillars drift around,
And Paradisal grubs are found;
Unfading moths, immortal flies,
And the worm that never dies.
And in that Heaven of all their wish,
There shall be no more land, say fish.

RUPERT BROOKE

The Mermaid



ALEIUS: . . . It doubtless might please God to make a mermaid; but I do not believe that God ever did make one.

Ornither: And why?

Haleius: Because wisdom and order are found in all his works, and the parts of animals are always in harmony with each other, and always adapted to certain ends consistent with the analogy of nature; and a human head, human hands, and human mammae are wholly inconsistent with a fish's tail. The human head is adapted for an erect posture, and in such a posture an animal with a fish's tail could not swim; and a creature with lungs must be on the surface several times in a day, and the sea is an inconvenient breathing place; and hands are instruments of manufacture, and the depths of the ocean are little fitted for fabricating that mirror which our old prints give to the mermaid.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY
from SALMONIA

Staring Wights

O SCALY, slippery, wet, swift, staring wights,
What is't ye do? what life lead? eh, dull goggles?
How do ye vary your vile days and nights?
How pass your Sundays? Are ye still but joggles
In ceaseless wash? Still naught but gapes and bites,
And drinks, and stares, diversified with boggles.

LEIGH HUNT
from THE FISH, THE MAN, AND THE SPIRIT

Of the Dragon of the Sea

THE DRAGON of the sea is a fish without scales, and when this is grown to a great and large proportion, whereby it doth great harm to other creatures, the windes or cloudes take him up suddenly in the ayre, and there by violent agitation shake his bodie to pieces: the parcels whereof so mangled and torn asunder have

been often found in the tops of mountains. And if this be true (as it may well be) I cannot tell whether there be in the world a more noble part of Divine providence and figure of the love of God to his fellow creatures who armeth the cloudes of heaven to take vengeance of their destroyers.

EDWARD TOPSELL
from BESTIARY

To a Fish of the Brooke

WHY flyest thou away with fear?
Trust me there's naught of danger near,
I have no wicked hooke
All covered with a snaring bait,
Alas, to tempt thee to thy fate,
And dragge thee from the brooke.

Enjoy thy stream, O harmless fish;
And when an angler for his dish,
Through gluttony's vile sin,
Attempts, a wretch, to pull thee *out*,
God give thee strength, O gentle trout,
To pull the raskall *in*!

JOHN WOLCOT

The Scaly Breed

IN genial Spring, beneath the quiv'ring shade
Where cooling Vapours breath along the Mead,
The patient Fisher takes his silent Stand,
Intent, his Angle trembling in his Hand;
With Looks unmov'd, he hopes the Scaly Breed,
And eyes the dancing Cork and Bending Reed.
Our plenteous Streams a various Race supply;
The bright-ey'd Perch, with Fins of Tyrian Dye,
The silver Eel, in shining Volumes roll'd,
The yellow Carp, in scales bedrop'd with Gold
Swift Trouts, diversify'd with Crimson Stains,
And Pykes the Tyrants of the wat'ry Plains.

ALEXANDER POPE
from WINDSOR FOREST

The Oubit

IT was an hairy oubit, sae proud he crept alang,
A feckless hairy oubit, and merrily he sang—
'My Minnie bad me bide at hame until I won my wings;
I'll show her soon my soul's aboon the warks o' creepin' things.'

This feckless hairy oubit cam' hirplin' by the linn,
A swirl o' win' cam' down the glen an' blew that oubit in:
O when he took the water, the saumon fry they rose
An' tigg'd him a' to pieces sma', by head an' tail an' toes.

Tak' warnin' then young poets a' by this poor oubit's shame;
Though Pegasus may nicher loud, keep Pegasus at hame.
O haud your hands frae inkhorns, though a' the Muses woo,
For critics lie like saumon fry to mak' their meals o' you.

CHARLES KINGSLEY

Eagle and Salmon

A CURIOUS incident was related to me a few days ago by a Highland gentleman. He was sauntering along the seashore with his gun, when he saw an eagle suddenly pounce upon some object in the water, in all probability a salmon. A fierce fight ensued, in which it seemed doubtful on which side would be the victory. The talons of the eagle were so deeply embedded in the back of the fish, that he could not extricate himself; while the fish, on his part, was not strong enough to drag his assailant under water. In this state they continued for some time; the tenant of the deep rushing wildly about, ploughing up the still waters of the bay; while the monarch of the air, for once fairly matched, was compelled to ride his funny courser *nolens volens*, occasionally declaring his majesty's reluctance by a not very dignified flapping of his kingly pinions. Thus engaged, my informant watched the struggle with considerable interest, until the combatants gradually drifted out to sea, and were presently lost to view.

JAMES CONWAY

from FORAYS AMONG SALMON AND DEER

Salmon

AROUND the cup of Struan's fall
Trees thrust their dark oppressive wall;
June's footsteps burn; dry wind-gusts call.

Within the pool's abysmal dun
A salmon eyes the shattered sun:
Salmon and water move as one.

Out of the sea with Spring he came
Joy-clothed in blue and silver flame,
A vision'd beauty, a strength untame.

Now prisoned in this pool scooped out
Of rock by the ageless water-spout
He waits the ending of the drought.

Come spate of water, swift he'll leap
On curving flash the foam-dazed steep
And onwards urge till he groove deep

Far natal shallows. There vast hills
Contain the Majesty who wills
The cycle that all life fulfils.

WILLIAM JEFFREY

'Lazy Fellows'

THEN they went down, leaving the song of the wind ever fainter behind them; and in its stead rose the song of the peat-stream bidding them come down to it. So they went; and there it was trickling down as clear as crystal, though as yellow as amber. There was but little water in it that fine midsummer, but it hastened on none the less over the stones in a desperate hurry, as are all Exmoor streams, to get to the sea. And it whispered its song as it went, but so low that they heard no words. They passed by a little shallow, and there the Calf saw dozens of little fry, scurrying about from stone to stone; and just below the shallow they came to a little brown, oily pool in a

basin of rock. The Calf looked into it, and there he saw his own little form, and behind it his mother's sweet eyes watching over him. And then for the first time he noticed that his own coat was spotted while his mother's was red. But while he was staring at the water a fly suddenly came, and began to dance a reel over it to show what a fine fellow he was, when all of a sudden a neat little body, all brown and gold and red spots, leaped up out of the water, seized the fly in his mouth and fell back with a splash which broke the pretty picture all to pieces.

He shrank back, for he was rather startled, but his mother soon comforted him. 'It was only a little Trout, my dear,' she said, 'only a greedy little Trout.'

'But he was such a pretty little fellow,' he said, for he had quite got over his fright; 'I wish he would jump again.'

But the Hind looked grave. 'We are never unkind to the Trout,' she said, 'for they belong to the peat-stream, but you must never become familiar with them. Fallow-Deer, I believe, treat them as equals,' and here she looked very proud, but we do not. They are a lazy lot of fellows whose forefathers would not take the trouble to go down to the sea, whereby they might have gown into noble fish, with a coat as bright as the moon on the water. But they would not, and so they have remained small and ugly, and they never lose their spots. You must never be rude to them, for that would be unworthy of a Red-Deer, but you must never make great friends with them. You may talk to little Salmon when we see them, for they lose their spots, but not to the Trout.' For the Hind was a great lady, with much pride of race, which though it made her civil to every one, taught her to be shy of idlers and low company.'

HON. SIR J. W. FORTESCUE
from THE STORY OF A RED-DEER

After the Spawning

UP THE two Deer went till the stream became so small that they could not imagine how so big a fish could keep afloat in it, but at last catching sight of what seemed to be two long black bars

in the water they went closer to see what these might be. And there, sure enough, was the Salmon with another Fish beside him, but he was as different from his former self as a stag in October is from a stag in August. The bright silver coat was gone and had given place to a suit of dirty rusty red; his sides, so deep and full in the summer, were narrow and shrunken; and indeed the biggest part of him was his head, which ended in a great curved beak, not light and fine as they had seen it before, but heavy and clumsy and coarse. He seemed to be in low spirits and half ashamed of himself, but he was as courteous as ever. "Allow me to present you to my wife," he said, "Though I am afraid that she is hardly fit to entertain visitors just at present."

Then the other Fish made a gentle, graceful movement with her tail, but she looked very ill and weak, and though she had no great beak like her mate, she seemed, like him, to be all head and no body.

"But, my Lord Salmon," said the Stag, "what has driven you so far up the water?"

"Well, you see," said the Salmon in a low voice, "that my wife is very particular about her nursery; nothing but the finest gravel will suit her to lay her eggs on. So we came up and up, and I am bound to say that we have found a charming gravel-bed, and that the eggs are doing as well as possible; but unfortunately the water has fallen low with this frost, and we cannot get down again till the rain comes. Only yesterday a man came by and tried to spear me and my wife with a pitchfork, but luckily he slipped on the frozen ground and fell into the water himself, so that we escaped. But she was very much frightened, and till the frost breaks we shall still be in danger. Do not stay here, for it is not safe; and besides I am ashamed to see visitors when we are in such a state."

"But what about the eggs, my Lord Salmon?" said the Stag.

"The stream will take care of them; and if a few are lost, what is that among ten thousand?" said the Salmon proudly. "But let me beg you not to wait."

HON. SIR J. W. FORTESCUE
from THE STORY OF A RED-DEER

Salmon Leap

HERE when the labouring fish does at the foot arrive,
And finds that by his strength but vainly he doth strive;
His tail takes in his teeth, and bending like a bow,
That's to the compass drawn, aloft himself doth throw:
Then springing at his height, as doth a little wand,
That, bended end to end, and flerted from the hand,
Far off itself doth cast, so does the salmon vault.
And if at first he fail, his second summersaut
He instantly assays and from his nimble ring,
Still yarking never leaves, until himself he fling
Above the streamful top of the surrounded heap.

MICHAEL DRAYTON
from POLYOLBION

The Dog-fish and the Salmon

A SALMON, as she swam into the sea,
Met with a dog-fish, who encounters her
With this rough language: 'Why art thou so bold
To mix thyself with our high state of floods,
Being no eminent courtier, but one
That for the calmest and fresh time o' the year
Dost live in shallow rivers, rank'st thyself
With silly smelts and shrimps? and darest thou
Pass by our dog-ship without reverence?'
'Oh!' quoth the salmon, 'sister be at peace:
Thank Jupiter we both have pass'd the net!
Our value never can be truly known
Till in the fisher's basket we be shown:
I' the market then my price may be the higher,
Even when I am nearest to the cook and fire.'

JOHN WEBSTER
from THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

The Town Trout

THE MOST amusing fish I ever caught there (in Wildbad) was a town resident. He lay immediately under the back window of a sausage shop. The houses go right into the river in this place, and he lived a life of luxury and majestic ease, and had grown to an enormous size on the refuse from the Wurstshop. The proprietor and I had many conversations about him across the river. He used to lean out of the window smoking, and spit confidentially on the head of his protégé, and wish me good luck and express complete scepticism as to my ability to get him. He became apoplectic with amusement when I made my first shot at it. There was a network of telegraph wires right along the street behind me at exactly the distance my line required to reach the far side. I felt the 'chug' on the rod and heard the 'ping' of the wire, and turned round to see the cast spinning round the nearest wire like a Catherine-wheel. I remember shaking my fist at my fat old friend at the window, and telling him that someday or other I would walk into the shop and lay his pet trout on the counter as a present for him. I had many attempts at getting my line across, and I tried it day after day till at last it was humorously and gently hinted to me by the policeman that I was seriously interfering with the traffic.

However, one morning we determined to stick to him till we got him. My brother was just as keen upon him as I was, and we chose the dinner-hour as being a time when no German who was not a lunatic would be abroad. I experimented for a quarter of an hour and found there was a place, and just one place, where I could stand and get a fly out by shooting the line, I was so triumphant I could have called out the sausage-man to see the fun, only he was at dinner. The first cast did it. The Sybarite was entirely unsuspecting. He had had liver and lights and other 'Delicatessen' showered on him for years, and when he saw a fat March-brown (no little blue duns on this occasion!) fly hard into the wall above his head and drop insensible onto the water, in front of his mouth, he very naturally swallowed it. I am sure he was the most surprised and indignant fish in Germany, for he had never faced insult or danger in his life. He gave one mighty roaring splash and raced downstream. My brother was so excited that he vaulted over

the railing into the water without thinking—it was above his waist, but no matter—and netted him in a comparatively short space of time. He was a disappointment. Under the wall he looked a Hans Sachs; in the basket he was a Beckmesser, for instead of 5 lbs. he only weighed 3 lbs. That, however, was not the point. The triumph was that we had eluded the telegraph wires and impressed on the mind of the sausage-man the invincibility of the Briton.

H. PLUNKET GREENE

from WHERE THE BRIGHT WATERS MEET

The Trout

HE hangs, a scimitar of light,
Miraculously in our sight,
Giving one moment to observe
His brief but agitated curve.

And so we work and dance the gay
Parabola of Life away,
And find the waters cool and deep
After that strange and frantic leap.

ROBERT BELL

Chalk-stream Trout

THESE SOUTHERN trout have, besides, their own peculiar, baffling and aggravating ways. How deeply absorbed they often are in other things to the exclusion of any interest in a dry fly! There is the 'tailing' fish, feeding on caddis, snail, or shrimp, breaking the surface, for all the world like a rise, with his tail instead of his nose, or exposing his white side as he routs his head into a bunch of weeds to dislodge the crustacea. There is the 'bulging' fish, showing now his fin, now his tail, now his head, who looks uncommonly like the real thing, and makes the water boil in a tantalising way as he darts hither and thither in pursuit of the larvae and nymphae as they rise to the surface. . . . There is the 'smutting' fish, greedily taking down the tiniest of insects, and

utterly oblivious of your finest cast and smallest fly; which, indeed, as it floats side by side with the monstrosly minute 'curse,' appears a Gulliver among the Lilliputians. There is the 'traveller,' usually a good fish, who, at intervals on the feed, moves up after every mouthful, and who, all of a sudden, unbeknown to you, drops down-stream, and is scared by the rod which was casting to where his last rise was seen. There is the 'cruiser,' a resident in still waters, a more likely customer for the fly, but who, being ever on the move, as likely as not never comes near it. But the most exasperating and the most mysterious of their tricks is that commonly called 'taking short,' or, as Cotton described it (so it is no new thing), the trout 'only chew your fly and will not take it.'

THE EARL OF BUXTON
from FISHING AND SHOOTING

The Unattainable

I know a pool where the river,
 Sunlit and still,
Slips by a bank of wild roses
 Down from the mill;
There do I linger when summer makes glorious
 Valley and hill.

Somewhere the song of a skylark
 Melts into air,
Butterflies float through the sunshine,
 June's everywhere;
Nature, in fact, shows an amiable jollity
 I do not share.

For in the shade of the alders,
 Scornful of flies,
There is a trout that no cunning
 Coaxes to rise;
Sly as Ulysses, and doubtful as Didymus,
 Mammoth in size.

And when the Mayfly battalions
Flutter and skim,
When all the others are filling
Baskets abrim,
I spend the cream of a fisherman's carnival
Casting at him;
Seeing in fancy my hackle
Seized with a flounce,
Hearing the reel racing madly
Under his pounce,
Knowing at last all the pounds of his magnitude
(Eight of an ounce!)
But of my drakes and my sedges
None make the kill,
None tempt him up from his fastness
Under the mill,
And, for I saw him as lately as Saturday,
There he is still.
Thus do Life's triumphs elude us,
Yet it may be
Some afternoon, when the keeper
Goes to his tea,
That, if a lob-worm were dropped unofficially—
Well, we shall see.

PATRICK R. CHALMERS

from GREEN DAYS AND BLUE DAYS

'The Trout at the Bridge'

'THE TROUT by the bridge'—You know him. You have only to look over the parapet, and there he is, fat, insolent, tolerant of your presence as ever. It matters nothing what bridge or what river. He is always there, somewhere about mid-stream, poised over a patch of gravel. So ostentatious is he you would take him for a parvenu but that you know how long he has been in the same place. He lies a few inches under water, heating himself luxuriously, and his broad green back shines half golden in the

sunlight. He is the picture of a fish 'in position'. But he only rises once; that is when he hears you come on to the bridge, and then he does it with a loud splash. He took no fly, for when a rod is near he feeds exclusively on nymphs and shrimp. But he means to be seen. His object in life is to be fished for; his only recreation the baiting of anglers. He examines each pattern as it floats over his head with an appearance of interest. Thus he keeps his victim amused, and passes the tying under review, for he is very critical, and has his theories about the best hackle and his preferences among the dubbings. He is not without a debased sense of humour. At the first cast he grins, at the fiftieth he laughs outright, at the 500th (for he keeps count, having his vanity, like the rest of us) he becomes helpless with merriment. When the angler breaks his rod against the brickwork he is unable to contain himself for sheer delight. As the angler curses aloud he notes down each word with an approving nod, for he is curious in commination. He thinks that human speech consists in nothing else, and indeed he is not to be blamed for his mistake. When at last the angler goes away for a gun the trout by the bridge rushes off to the club to tell the others of his morning's sport. It loses nothing in the telling, we may be sure.

WILLIAM CAINE

from FISH, FISHING AND FISHERMEN

Ten Thousand Devils

Salmo fario may, for the ichthyologist, be no more than a single species, with perhaps a few local variants. To the trout fisherman, however, he is no mere trout, one and indivisible,

ἀλλ' ἐστὶ πολλῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπώνυμος
 ἔστιν μὲν Ἀιδης, ἔστι δ' ἄφθιτος βίος,
 ἔστιν δὲ λύσσα μανίας, ἔστι δ' ἡμερος
 ἄκραντος, ἔστ' οἰμωγμός.

Which signifies, as Brother John would interpret it, that the trout is no single, common, identical, definite, determined and measurable fish, but rather ten thousand tantalizing, distinct and different devils.

SIR CHARLES J. HOLMES

from THE TARN AND THE LAKE

On Equal Terms

TROUT BECOME stout and short-winded from the same causes that make men so. Give them proper exercise or a more stimulating diet—their natural strength and activity will return. Place them in some strong mountain water where flies and their larvae are few, and their breeding grounds extensive; they will become numerous and small. Place them in a pool where food is plentiful, but where there are no shallows for breeding; they will grow large and remain few. Leave them undisturbed and they will grow unsuspecting; fish for them and their native wits will expand to challenge yours. In virtue of this instinctive response to outward conditions the trout becomes to the angler no unworthy antagonist. He is a being of like intelligence and appetites, so that the opponents meet on equal terms. The successful angler is the man who most fully recognizes this parity, and can act upon it.

SIR CHARLES J. HOLMES
from THE TARN AND THE LAKE

The Trout

THE trout by nature mark'd with many a crimson spot,
As though she curious were in him above the rest,
And of fresh-water fish did note him for the best.

MICHAEL DRAYTON
from POLYOLBION

The Pike

FROM shadows of rich oaks outpeer
The moss-green bastions of the weir,
Where the quick dipper forages
In elver-peopled crevices,
And a small runlet trickling down the sluice
Gossamer music tires not to unloose.

Else round the broad pools hush
Nothing stirs,
Unless sometime a straggling heifer crush
Through the thronged spinney where the pheasant whirs;
Or martins in a flash
Come with wild mirth to dip their magical wings,
While in the shallow some doomed bulrush swings
At whose hid root the diver vole's teeth gnash.

And nigh this toppling reed, still as the dead
The great pike lies, the murderous patriarch
Watching the waterpit sheer-delving dark,
Where through the splash his lithe bright vassals thread.

The rose-finned roach & bluish bream
And staring ruffe steal up the stream
Hard by their gluttoned tyrant, now
Still as a sunken bough.

He on the sandbank lies,
Sunning himself long hours
With stony gorgon eyes:
Westward the hot sun lowers.

Sudden the gray pike changes, and quivering poises for slaughter;
Intense terror wakens around him, the shoals scud awry, but
there chances
A chub unsuspecting; the prowling fins quicken, in fury he
lances;
And the miller that opens the hatch stands amazed at the whirl in
the water.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

from THE WAGGONER AND OTHER POEMS

The Swallow and the Pike

ONE VERY still, warm summer afternoon I stood on the margin,
looking across the sheet of glassy water at a heron on the farther
side, standing knee-deep in the shallow water patiently watching
for a fish, his grey figure showing distinctly against a back-ground
of bright green sedges. Between me and the heron scores of

swallows and martins were hawking for flies, gliding hither and thither a little above the glassy surface, and occasionally dropping down to dip and wet their under plumage in the water. And all at once, fifty yards out from the margin, there was a great splash, as if a big stone had been flung out into the lake; and then two or three moments later out from the falling spray and rocking water rose a swallow, struggling laboriously up, its plumage drenched, and flew slowly away. A big pike had dashed at and tried to seize it at the moment of dipping in the water, and the swallow had escaped as by a miracle. I turned round to see if any person was near, who might by chance have witnessed so strange a thing, in order to speak to him about it. There was no person within sight, but if on turning round my eyes had encountered the form of a Cistercian monk, returning from his day's labour in the fields, in his dirty black-and-white robe, his implements on his shoulders, his face and hands begrimed with dust and sweat, the apparition on that day, in the mood I was in, would not have greatly surprised me.

W. H. HUDSON
from HAMPSHIRE DAYS

The Pike's Physician

THE Pike, fell tyrant of the liquid plain,
With ravenous waste devours his fellow train;
Yet, howsoe'er with raging famine pin'd,
The Tench he spares, a medicinal kind;
For when by wounds distress'd, or sore disease,
He courts the salutary fish for ease;
Close to his scales the kind physician glides;
And sweats the healing balsam from his sides.

ALEXANDER POPE

The Pike

AS TO his daily transaction, he thus disposes of himself. In a hot gloomy day, he gets to the surface of the water, as if he had a desire to exchange his element to enjoy the comfortable influence

of the airy region: he then scorns to be tempted with a bait, and can live all day with a little more nourishment than the motes in the sun; for you no sooner offer him the kindness of a deceitful bait, than he is gone as swift as lightning.

ROBERT NOBBS
from THE COMPLETE TROLLER

Perch-fishing

ON the far hill the cloud of thunder grew
And sunlight blurred below; but sultry blue
Burned yet on the valley water where it hoards
Behind the miller's elmen floodgate boards,
And where the wasps, that lodge them ill-concealed
In the vole's empty house, still drove afield
To plunder touchwood from old crippled trees
And build their young ones their hutched nurseries;
Still creaked the grasshopper's rasping unison
Nor had the whisper through the tansies run
Nor weather-wisest bird gone home.

How then
Should wry eels in the pebbled shallows ken
Lightning coming? Troubled up they stole
To the deep-shadowed sullen water-hole,
Among whose warty snags the quaint perch lair.
As cunning stole the boys to angle there,
Muffling least tread, with no noise balancing through
The hang-dog alder boughs his bright bamboo.
Down plumbed the shuttled ledger, and the quill
On the quicksilver water lay dead still.

A sharp snatch, swirling to-fro of the line,
He's lost, he's won, with splash & scuffling shine
Past the low-lapping brandy-flowers drawn in,
The ogling hunchback perch with needled fin.
And there beside him one as large as he,
Following his hooked mate, careless who shall see

Or what befall him, close & closer yet—
The startled boy might take him in his net
That folds the other.

Slow, while on the clay
The other flounders, slow he sinks away.
What agony usurps that watery brain
For comradeship of twenty summers slain,
For such delights below the flashing weir
And up the sluice-cut, playing buccaneer
Among the minnows; lolling in hot sun
When bathing vagabonds had drest and done;
Rootling in salty flannel-weed for meal
And river shrimps, when hushed the trundling wheel;
Snapping the dapping moth, and with new wonder
Prowling through old drowned barges falling asunder.
And O a thousand things the whole year through
They did together, never more to do.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

from THE WAGGONER AND OTHER POEMS

The Epicurean Way

Haleius: Pray let me entreat you to use no other sauce than the water in which he was boiled. I assure you this is the true Epicurean way of eating fresh salmon: and for the trout, use only a little vinegar and mustard—a sauce *à la Tartare*, without the onions.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY

from SALMONIA

A Recipe

I WILL pass you on the closely treasured and cherishly-guarded recipe I had from the descendant of one Friar Convivius—who I sincerely hope is in heaven—and which was one of the delights of Madame Juliane de Berners, who wrote the first book on 'Fyshyng with an Angle' in 1496, and who had it from the winsome sister who kept the Refectory of the Nunnery.

Gather a pound or so of mushrooms when the dew lies heavy on the cap, catch your bream before the sun can scorch its sides, lay it in salt and bay leaves till two hours passes noon, and then having cleaned, scaled and taken out the throat, and all that therein is, lay it in a wide dish of clay or earthenware with a goodly sprinkle of thyme, rosemary, marjoram, mace, and the mushrooms; stiffening it with a forcemeat made of liver and pig's flesh, fat, and some of the herbs with a chopped shallot all mixed with breadcrumbs. Place pieces of butter on the top of the bream, and stew in the oven—basting with a rich brown sauce made of some of the liver and pig's flesh with a beaker of malvoisie—half a glass of any wine will do in these less romantic days—and cook gently in the wise fashion taught by samplers of the monastic court. Of course this recipe is as translated and condensed.

A. M. YOUNG

from THE STORY OF THE STREAM

The Fish

IN a cool curving world he lies
And ripples with dark ecstasies.
The kind luxurious lapse & steal
Shapes all his universe to feel
And know & be; the clinging stream
Closes his memory, glooms his dream.
Who lips the roots o' the shore, and glides
Superb on unreturning tides.
Those silent waters weave for him
A fluctuant mutable world & dim,
Where wave ring masses bulge & gape
Mysterious & shape to shape
Dies momentarily through whorl & hollow,
And form & line & solid follow
Solid & line & form to dream
Fantastic down the eternal stream;
An obscure world, a shifting world.
Bulbous, or pulled to thin, or curled,

Or serpentine, or driving arrows,
Or serene slidings, or March narrows.
There slipping wave & shore are one,
And weed and mud. No ray of sun,
But glow to glow fades down the deep
(As dream to unknown dream in sleep);
Shaken translucency illumines
The hyaline of drifting glooms;
The strange soft-handed depth subdues
Drowned colour there, but black to hues,
As death to living, decomposes—
Red darkness of the heart of roses,
Blue brilliant from dead starless skies,
And gold that lies behind the eyes,
The unknown unnameable sightless white
That is the essential flame of night,
Lustreless purple, hooded green,
The myriad hues that lie between
Darkness and darkness! . . .

And all's one,
Gentle, embracing, quiet, dun,
The world he rests in, world he knows,
Perpetual curving. Only—grows
An eddy in that ordered falling,
A knowledge from the gloom, a calling
Weed in the wave, gleam in the mud—
The dark fire leaps along his blood;
Dateless & deathless, blind & still,
The intricate purpose works its will;
His woven world drops back; and he,
Sans providence, sans memory,
Unconscious & directly driven,
Fades to some dank sufficient heaven.

O world of lips, O world of laughter,
Where hope is fleet & thought flies after,
Of lights in the clear night, of cries
That drift along the wave & rise

Thin to the glittering stars above,
You know the hands, the eyes of love!
The strife of limbs, the sightless clinging,
The infinite distance, & the singing,
Blown by the wind, a flame of sound,
The gleam, the flowers, the vast around
The horizon, & the heights above—
You know the sigh, the song of love!

But there the night is close, and there
Darkness is cold & strange and bare;
And the secret deeps are whisperless;
And rhythm is all deliciousness;
And joy is in the throbbing tide,
Whose intricate fingers beat & glide
In felt bewildering harmonies
Of trembling touch; and music is
The exquisite knocking of the blood.
Space is no more, under the mud;
His bliss is older than the sun.
Silent & straight the waters run.
The lights, the cries, the willows dim,
And the dark tide are one with him.

RUPERT BROOKE

Rivers and Lakes

For Wise Men and Fools

AN INGENIOUS Spaniard says that "rivers and the inhabitants of the watery element were made for wise men to contemplate, and fools to pass by without consideration."

IZAAK WALTON

from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

Paradise

WHEN, O STRANGER, thou hast reached a burn where the shepherd asks thee for the newspaper wrapped round thy sandwiches, that he may read the news, then erect an altar to Priapus, god of fishermen, and begin to angle boldly.

ANDREW LANG

from ANGLING SKETCHES (LONGMANS,
GREEN AND CO.) 1891

'Rivers Arise'

RIVERS arise; whether thou be the Son,
Of utmost Tweed, or Oose, or gulphie Dun,
Or Trent, who like some earth-born Giant spreads
His thirty Armes along the indented Meads,
Or sullen Mole that runneth underneath,
Or Severn swift, guilty of Maidens death,
Or Rockie Avon, or of Sedgie Lee,
Or Coaly Tine, or antient hallowed Dee,
Or Humber loud that keeps the Scythians Name,
Or Medway smooth, or Royal Towred Thame.

JOHN MILTON

from AT A VACATION EXERCISE

The River of Eden

SOUTHWARD through Eden went a River large,
Nor chang'd his course, but through the shaggy hill
Pass'd underneath ingulft, for God had thrown
That Mountain as his Garden mould high rais'd

Upon the rapid current, which through veins
 Of porous Earth with kindly thirst up drawn,
 Rose a fresh Fountain, and with many a rill
 Water'd the Garden; thence united fell
 Down the steep glade, and met the neather Flood,
 Which from his darksom passage now appears,
 And now divided into four main Streams,
 Runs divers, wandring many a famous Realme
 And Country whereof here needs no account,
 But rather to tell how, if Art could tell,
 How from that Saphire Fount the crisped Brooks,
 Rowling on Orient Pearl and sands of Gold,
 With mazie error under pendant shades
 Ran Nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
 Flours worthy of Paradise which not nice Art
 In Beds and curious Knots, but Nature boon
 Powrd forth profuse on Hill and Dale and Plaine,
 Both where the morning Sun first warmly smote
 The open field, and where the unpierc't shade
 Imbround the noontide Bows. . . .

. . . mean while murmuring waters fall
 Down the slope hills, disperst, or in a Lake,
 That to the fringed Bank with Myrtle crown'd,
 Her chrystall mirror holds, unite thir streams.

JOHN MILTON
from PARADISE LOST

Northern River

NORTHWARD, NORTHWARD, still! And it came to pass that, one morning, I found myself extended on the bank of a river. It was a beautiful morning of early spring; small white clouds were floating in the heaven, occasionally veiling the countenance of the sun, whose light, as they retired, would again burst forth, coursing like a racehorse over the scene—and a goodly scene it was! Before me, across the water, on an eminence, stood a white old city, surrounded with lofty walls, above which rose the tops

of tall houses, with here and there a church or steeple. To my right hand was a long and massive bridge, with many arches and of antique architecture, which traversed the river. The river was a noble one; the broadest that I had hitherto seen. Its waters, of a greenish tinge, poured with impetuosity beneath the narrow arches to meet the sea, close at hand, as the boom of the billows breaking distinctly upon a beach declared. There were songs upon the river from the fisher-barks; and occasionally a chorus plaintive and wild, such as I had never heard before, the words of which I did not understand, but which at the present time, down the long avenue of years, seem in memory's ear to sound like 'Horam, coram, dago.' Several robust fellows were near me, some knee-deep in water, employed in hauling the seine upon the strand. Huge fish were struggling amidst the meshes—princely salmon—their brilliant mail of blue and silver flashing in the morning beam; so goodly and gay a scene, in truth, had never greeted my boyish eye.

And, as I gazed upon the prospect, my bosom began to heave, and my tears to trickle. Was it the beauty of the scene which gave rise to these emotions? . . .

And as I lay on the bank and wept, there drew nigh to me a man in the habiliments of a fisher. He was bare-legged, of a weather-beaten countenance, and of stature approaching to the gigantic.

'What is the callant greeting for?' said he, as he stopped and surveyed me. 'Has ony body wrought ye ony harm?'

'Not that I know of,' I replied, rather guessing at than understanding his question; 'I was crying because I could not help it! I say, old one, what is the name of this river?'

'Hout! I now see what you was greeting at—at your ain ignorance, nae doubt—'tis very great! Weel, I will na fash you with reproaches, but even enlighten ye, since ye seem a decent man's bairn, and you speir a civil question. Yon river is called the Tweed; and yonder, over the brig, is Scotland. Did ye never hear of the Tweed, my bonny man?'

'No,' said I, as I rose from the grass, and proceeded to cross the bridge to the town at which we had arrived the preceding night; 'I never heard of it; but now I have seen it, I shall not soon forget it!'

GEORGE BORROW
from LAVENGRO

'Thus the Mayne glideth'

THUS the Mayne glideth
Where my love abideth;
Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,
Though the niggard pasturage
Bears not on its shaven ledge
Aught but weeds and waving grasses
To view the river as it passes,
Save here and there a scanty patch
Of primroses too faint to catch
A weary bee. . . . And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they:
Naught disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

ROBERT BROWNING

The Current

THE current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage;
But when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones,

Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage;
And so by many winding nooks he strays
With willing sport, to the wild ocean.

SHAKESPEARE

from THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

Test and Itchen

‘THERE ARE no more refreshing places in Hampshire, one might almost say in England, than the green level valleys of the Test and Itchen that wind, alternately widening and narrowing, through the downland country to Southampton Water. Twin rivers they may be called, flowing at no great distance apart through the same kind of country, and closely alike in their general features: land and water intermixed—greenest water-meadows and crystal currents that divide and subdivide and join again, and again separate, forming many a miniature island and long slip of wet meadow with streams on either side. At all times refreshing to the sight and pleasant to dwell by, they are best when it is summer and the green is deep. Greens of darkest bulrushes, tipped with bright brown panicles, growing in masses where the water is wide and shallowest; of grey-green graceful reeds, and of tallest reed-mace with dark velvety-brown spikes; behind them all, bushes and trees—silvery-leaved willow and poplar, and dark alder, and old thorns and brambles in tangled masses; and always in the foreground lighter and brighter sedges, glaucous green flags, mixed with great hemp agrimony, with flesh-coloured, white-powdered flowers, and big-leaved comfrey, and scores of other water and moisture-loving plants.

Through this vegetation, this infinite variety of refreshing greens and graceful forms, flow the rapid rivers, crystal-clear and cold from the white chalk, a most beautiful water, with floating water-grass in it—the fascinating *Poa fluviatilis* which, rooted in the pebbly bed, looks like green loosened wind-blown hair swaying and trembling in the ever-crinkled, swift current.’

W. H. HUDSON

from HAMPSHIRE DAYS

'The Bonny Tweed for Me'

WHEN the fresh green sward is yieldin' wi' a spring aneath the fit,
And swallows thrang on either wing out owre the waters flit;
While the joyous laverocks, toorin' high, shoor out their concert
free—

Then the troutin' stream, the fishin' gad, the bonny Tweed for
me.

Cheer'd wi' the honest ploughman's sang, that mak's his wark
nae toil—

The flocks o' sea-gulls round him as his coulter tears the soil;
When the craw-schule meets in council grave upon the furrowed
lea—

Then the troutin' stream, the fishin' gad, the bonny Tweed for
me.

The modest wagtail joukin' past, wi' saft and buoyant flight,
And gurglin' streams are dancin' by, pure as the crystal bright,
When fish rise thick and threefault, at the drake or woodcock
flee—

Then the troutin' stream, the fishin' gad, the bonny Tweed for
me.

I like the merry spring, wi' the bluid in nature's veins,
The dancin' streamlet's music, as it tinkles through the stanes,
The silver white upon the hook, my light gad bendin' free—
Wha wadna visit bonny Tweed and share sic sport wi' me?

WILLIAM A. FOSTER

The Muse

THE Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himself he learn'd to wander
Adown some trottin' burn's meander
An no think lang;
O sweet to stray an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang.

ROBERT BURNS

A Day's Fishing at Cheney's

A DAY'S fishing at Cheney's means a day by the best water in England in the fisherman's paradise of solitude. . . .

The Cheney's fishing is divided in the middle by a mill. Below the mill the trout are in greatest numbers, but comparatively small; above is a long still deep pool where the great monsters lie, and in common weather never stir till twilight. The keeper and I remember a summer evening some years ago, when at night-fall, after a burning day, the glittering surface of the water was dimpled with rings, and a fly thrown into the middle of these circles was answered more than once by a rush and scream of the reel; and a struggle which the darkness made more exciting. You may as well fish on the high road as in the mill-pool when the sun is above the horizon, and even at night you will rarely succeed there; but at the beginning of the May-fly season these large fish sometimes run up to the rapid stream at the pool head to feed. This the keeper decides shall be tried if the fly comes down. . . .

It was as he had foretold; the great fish had come up, and were rolling like salmon on the top of the water gulping down the May-flies. Even when they are thus carelessly ravenous, the clearness of the river creates a certain difficulty in catching them in ordinary times, but to-day the flood made caution superfluous. They were splashing on the surface close to our feet, rolling about in a negligent gluttony which seemed to take from them every thought of danger, for a distance of at least 300 yards.

There was no longer any alarm for the tackle, and it was but to throw the fly upon the river, near or far, for a trout instantly to seize it. There was no shy rising where suspicion balks the appetite. The fish were swallowing with a deliberate seriousness every fly which drifted in their reach, snapping their jaws upon it with a gulp of satisfaction. The only difficulty was in playing them when hooked with a delicate chalk-stream casting-line. For an hour and a half it lasted, such an hour and a half of trout fishing as I had never seen and shall never see again. The ease of success at last became wearisome. Two large baskets were filled

to the brim. Accident had thrown in my way a singular opportunity which it would have been wrong to abuse, so I decided to stop. We emptied out our spoils upon the grass, and the old keeper said he had never but once seen so many fish of so large size taken in the Chess in a single day by a single rod.

J. A. FROUDE
from CHENEYS AND THE HOUSE OF RUSSELL

Yarrow

SWEET smells the birk, green grows, green grows the grass,
Yellow on Yarrow's braes the gowan,
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowan.

Flows Yarrow sweet? as sweet, as sweet flows Tweed,
As green its grass, its gowan as yellow,
As sweet smells on its braes the birk,
The apple frae the rock as mellow.

WILLIAM HAMILTON

Ode to Leven Water

PURE stream, in whose transparent wave
My youthful limbs I wont to lave;
No torrents stain thy limpid source,
No rocks impede thy dimpling course,
That sweetly warbles o'er its bed,
With white round polished pebbles spread;
While, lightly poised, the scaly brood
In myriads cleave thy crystal flood;
The springing trout in speckled pride,
The salmon, monarch of the tide;
The ruthless pike, intent on war,
The silver eel and mottled par.

Devolving from thy parent lake,
A charming maze thy waters make,
By bowers of birch and groves of pine,
And edges flowered with eglantine.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT

The Salmon River

AND WHEN the daylight came, Tom found himself out in the salmon river.

And what sort of a river was it? Was it like an Irish stream, winding through the brown bogs, where the wild ducks squatter up from among the white water-lilies, and the curlews flit to and fro, crying 'Tullie-wheep, mind your sheep'; and Dennis tells you strange stories of the Peishtamore, the great boggy-snake which lies in the black peat pools, among the old pine-stems, and puts his head out at night to snap at the cattle as they come down to drink?—But you must not believe all that Dennis tells you, mind; for if you ask him:

'Is there a salmon here, do you think, Dennis?'

'Is it salmon, thin, your honour manes? Salmon? Cartloads it is of thim, thin, an' ridgmens, shouldthering ache out of water, av' ye'd but the luck to see thim.'

Then you fish the pool all over, and never get a rise. . . .

Or was it like a Welsh salmon river, which is remarkable chiefly (at least, till this last year) for containing no salmon, as they have been all poached out by the enlightened peasantry to prevent the Cythrawl Sassenach . . . from coming bothering into Wales, with good tackle, and ready money, and civilisation, and common honesty, and other like things of which the Cymry stand in no need whatsoever?

Or was it such a salmon stream as I trust you will see among the Hampshire water-meadows before your hairs are grey, under the wise new fishing-laws?—when Winchester apprentices shall covenant, as they did three hundred years ago, not to be made to eat salmon more than three days a week; and fresh-run fish shall be as plentiful under Salisbury spire as they are in Holly-hole

at Christchurch; in the good time coming, when folk shall see that, of all Heaven's gifts of food, the one to be protected most carefully is that worthy gentleman salmon, who is generous enough to go down to the sea weighing five ounces, and to come back next year weighing five pounds, without having cost the soil or the state one farthing?

Or was it like a Scotch stream, such as Arthur Clough drew in his 'Bothie':—

Where over a ledge of granite

Into a granite bason the amber torrent descended. . . .

Beautiful there for the colour derived from green rocks under;

Beautiful most of all, where beads of foam uprising

Mingle their clouds of white with the delicate hue of the still-
ness. . . .

Cliff over cliff for its sides, with rowan and pendent birch
boughs. . . .

Ah, my little man, when you are a big man, and fish such a stream as that, you will hardly care, I think, whether she be roaring down in full spate, like coffee covered with scald cream, while the fish are swirling at your fly as an oar-blade swirls in a boat-race, or flashing up the cataract like silver arrows, out of the fiercest of the foam; or whether the fall be dwindled to a single thread, and the shingle below be as white and dusty as a turnpike road, while the salmon huddle together in one dark cloud in the clear amber pool, sleeping away their time till the rain creeps back again off the sea. You will not care much, if you have eyes and brains; for you will lay down your rod contentedly, and drink in at your eyes the beauty of that glorious place; and listen to the water-ouzel piping on the stones, and watch the yellow roes come down to drink and look up at you with their great soft trustful eyes, as much as to say, 'You could not have the heart to shoot at us?' And then, if you have sense, you will turn and talk to the great giant of a gilly who lies basking on the stone beside you. He will tell you no fibs, my little man; for he is a Scotchman, and fears God. . . .

No. It was none of these, the salmon stream at Harthover. It was such a stream as you see in dear old Bewick; Bewick, who was

born and bred upon them. A full hundred yards broad it was, sliding on from broad pool to broad shallow, and broad shallow to broad pool, over great fields of shingle, under oak and ash coverts, past low cliffs of sandstone, past green meadows, and fair parks, and a great house of grey stone, and brown moors above, and here and there against the sky the smoking chimney of a colliery. You must look at Bewick to see just what it was like, for he has drawn it a hundred times with the care and the love of a true north countryman.

CHARLES KINGSLEY
from THE WATER-BABIES

Lines on the River Severn

so that of every kind, the new-spawn'd numerous fry,
Seem in me as the sands that on the shore do lie.
The barbel, than which fish a braver doth not swim,
Nor greater for the ford within my spacious brim,
Nor (newly taken) more than curious taste doth please;
The grayling, whose great spawn is big as any pease;
The perch, with prickly fins, against the pike prepared,
As nature hath thereon bestowed this stronger guard,
His daintiness to keep (each curious palate's proof)
From his vile ravenous foe; next him I name the ruff,
His very near ally, and both for scale and fin,
In taste, and for his bait (indeed) his next of kin.
The pretty slender dare, of many called the dace,
Within my liquid glass, when Phoebus looks his face,
Oft swiftly, as he swims, his silver belly shows,
But with such nimble flight, that ere you can disclose
His shape, out of your sight like lightning he is shot.
The trout by nature mark'd with many a crimson spot,
As though she curious were in him above the rest,
And of fresh-water fish, did unto him the best.

.
The lusty salmon, then, from Neptune's wat'ry realm,
Who for their numerous stores, stemming my tideful stream,

Then being in his kind, in me his pleasure takes
(For whom the fisher then all other game forsakes),
Which bending of himself to the fashion of a ring,
Above the forceful wears himself doth nimble fling.

MICHAEL DRAYTON

Walden Pond

STANDING ON the smooth sandy beach at the east end of the pond, in a calm September afternoon, when a slight haze makes the opposite shore-line indistinct, I have seen whence came the expression, 'the glassy surface of a lake.' When you invert your head, it looks like a thread of finest gossamer stretched across the valley, and gleaming against the distant pine woods, separating one stratum of the atmosphere from another. You would think that you could walk dry under it to the opposite hills, and that the swallows which skim over might perch on it. Indeed, they sometimes dive below the line, as it were by mistake, and are undeceived. As you look over the pond westward you are obliged to employ both your hands to defend your eyes against the reflected as well as the true sun, for they are equally bright; and if, between the two, you survey its surface critically, it is literally as smooth as glass, except where the skater insects, at equal intervals scattered over its whole extent, by their motions in the sun produce the finest imaginable sparkle on it, or, perchance, a duck plumes itself, or, as I have said, a swallow skims so low as to touch it. It may be that in the distance a fish describes an arc of three or four feet in the air, and there is one bright flash where it emerges, and another where it strikes the water; sometimes the whole silvery arc is revealed; or here and there, perhaps, is a thistle-down floating on its surface, which the fishes dart at and so dimple it again. It is like molten glass cooled but not congealed, and the few motes in it are pure and beautiful like the imperfections in glass. You may often detect a yet smoother and darker water, separated from the rest as if by an invisible cobweb, boom of the water nymphs, resting on it. From a hilltop you can see a fish leap in almost any part; for not a pickerel or shiner picks an

insect from this smooth surface but it manifestly disturbs the equilibrium of the whole lake. It is wonderful with what elaborateness this simple fact is advertised,—this piscine murder will out,—and from my distant perch I distinguish the circling undulations when they are half a dozen rods in diameter.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU
from WALDEN, OR LIFE IN THE WOODS

Twilight on Tweed

THREE crests against the saffron sky
Beyond the purple plain,
The kind remembered melody
Of Tweed once more again.

Wan water from the Border hills,
Dear voice from the old years,
Thy distant music lulls and stills,
And moves to quiet tears.

Like a loved ghost thy fabled flood
Fleets through the dusky land;
Where Scott, come home to die, has stood,
My feet returning stand.

A mist of memory broods and floats,
The Border waters flow,
The air is full of ballad notes,
Borne out of long ago.

Old songs that sung themselves to me,
Sweet through a boy's day-dream,
While trout below the blossom'd tree
Plashed in the golden stream.

Twilight and Tweed, and Eildon Hill,
Fair and too fair you be;
You tell me the voice is still
That should have welcomed me.

ANDREW LANG

'Rivers Don't Gi'e Out'

THE brook I left below the rank
Ov alders that do sheäde his bank,
A-runnèn down to dreve the mill
Below the knap, 's a-runnèn still;
The creepèn days an' weeks do vill
 Up years, an' meäke wold things o' new,
 An' vo'k do come, an' live, an' goo,
 But rivers don't gi'e out, John.

The leaves that in the spring do shoot
Zo green, in fall be under voot;
May flow'rs do grow vor June to burn,
An' milk-white blooth o' trees do kern,
An' ripen on, an' vall in turn;
 The miller's moss-green wheel mid rot,
 An' he mid die an' be vorgot,
 But rivers don't gi'e out, John.

WILLIAM BARNES

Blagdon

I LOVE Blagdon, not only because it holds great fish, but because I have always been happy there. It would be impossible to find more delightful people than those of the farm who have always taken me in as their guest. I have a vivid recollection, too, of the time, in the middle of the war when we were most severely rationed, when I arrived there starved and tired to death after weeks of work and drill. I sat down to potato-soup, a wild-duck, a black-currant pudding, a local 'Wensleydale' cheese and as much cider as I wanted—all farm-grown. But they were (and are) part and parcel of that lovely spot in Somerset typical of southern England at its best.

Blagdon is an artificial reservoir, it is true, but it is only the western end that lets you into that secret. Here is the big embankment of which Sheringham speaks in *Trout-fishing*, where the 'great whales' lie with their noses on the stones. But you can sit on the grass in a dozen places round the shore and swear that you

are on the banks of one of the prettiest natural lakes in the kingdom. There is not a lovelier sight (*pace* Ramsay and Hurstbourne Priors in buttercup-time) in England than Blagdon from the Butcombe end at sundown, with the tiny town straggling up the steep hill-side like a Bavarian village, the red roofs of the houses peeping out of the thick orchards (with never a Methodist Chapel to shock the artist's eye), and the evening sunlight setting the windows of the old church aglow and flushing with purple-pink the glassy surface of the lake. There is a stillness here that belongs to no other valley. You can hear the 'plop' of the big trout far out half a mile away. You can talk to your friend across the water when the sun is down without ever raising your voice, and hear the scream of his reel in the blackness, and Blagdon is about seven miles round, and he may be half the length of the lake from you.

H. PLUNKET GREENE

from WHERE THE BRIGHT WATERS MEET

Fishing Song

OH, Mr. Froude, how wise and good
To point us out this way to glory—
They're no great shakes, these Snowdon lakes,
And all their pounders myth and story.
Blow Snowdon! What's Lake Gwynant to Killarney,
Or spluttering Welsh to tender blarney, blarney, blarney?

So Thomas Hughes, Sir, if you choose,
I'll tell you where we think of going,
To swate and far o'er cliff and scar,
Hear horns of Elfland faintly blowing;
Blow Snowdon! There's a hundred lakes to try in,
And fresh-caught salmon daily frying, frying, frying.

Geology and botany
A hundred wonders shall diskiver,
We'll flog and troll in strid and hole
And skim the cream of lake and river.
Blow Snowdon! Give me Ireland for my pennies,
Hurrah! for salmon, grilse and—Dennis, Dennis, Dennis!

In Praise of Tweed

LET ither anglers chuse their ain,
And ither waters tak the lead;
O Hielan' streams we covet nane,
But gie to us the bonnie Tweed.
And gie to us the cheerfu' burn
That steals into its valley fair—
The streamlets that at ilka turn
Sae saftly meet and mingle there.

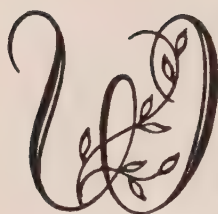
The lanesome Talla and the Lyne,
An' Manor wi' its mountain rills,
An' Etterick, whose waters twine
Wi' Yarrow frae the Forest hills;
An' Gala, too, and Teviot bright,
An' mony a stream o' playfu' speed;
Their kindred valleys a' unite
Amang the braes o' bonnie Tweed.

There's no a hole abune the Crook,
Nor stane nor gentle swirl aneath,
Nor drumlie rill nor faëry brook,
That daunders through the flowery heath,
But ye may fin' a subtle troot,
A' gleamin' ower wi' starn an' bead,
An' mony a sawmon swims aboot
Below the bields o' bonnie Tweed.

Frae Holylee to Clovenford,
A chancier bit ye canna hae,
So gin ye tak' an angler's word
Ye'd through the whins an' ower the brae,
An' work awa' wi' cunnin' hand,
Yer birzy hackles, black and reid;
The saft sough o' a slender wand
Is sweetest music for the Tweed!

THOMAS TOD STODDART

Tiny Waters



HEN the hills have been lost in grey wool for half a day, when the thunder has crashed about the rocks, and the good rain has poured as if it knew its duty, then the trout all come back again out of the heather and lie at every corner behind every stone, assimilating worms as fast as jaws can work and stomachs digest. Set out while the water is still porter-coloured—and you will seldom find it more definitely tinged at these altitudes, where there are no road washings—and ply your worm-tackle, and you will find that the neighbouring heather must have been alive with fish, some of them brave fellows of five and six ounces.

H. T. SHERINGHAM

from TROUT FISHING—MEMORIES AND MORALS

The River

THROUGH sun-bright lakes,
Round islets gay,
The River takes
Its western way,
And the water-chime
Soft zephyrs time
Each gladsome summer day.

The starry trout,
Fair to behold,
Roameth about
On fin of gold;
At root of tree—
His haunt you may see,
Rude rock or crevice old.

And hither dart
The salmon grey,
From the deep heart

Of some sea bay;
And herling wild
Is here beguiled
To hold autumnal play.

Oh! 'tis a stream
Most fair to see,
As in a dream
Flows pleasantly;
And our hearts are woo'd
To a kind sweet mood
By its wondrous witchery.

THOMAS TOD STODDART

A Border Burn

AH, Tam! gie me a Border burn
That canna rin without a turn,
And wi' its bonnie babble fills
The glens amang oor native hills.
How men that ance have kenn'd about it
Can leeve their after lives withoot it,
I canna tell, for day and nicht
It comes unca'd-for to my sicht.
I see't this moment, plain as day,
As it comes bickerin' o'er the brae,
Atween the clumps o' purple heather,
Glistenin' in the summer weather,
Syne divin' in below the grun',
Where, hidden frae the sicht and sun,
It gibbers like a deid man's ghost
That clamours for the licht it's lost,
Till oot again the loupin' limmer
Comes dancin' doon through shine and shimmer
At headlang pace, till wi' a jaw
It jumps the rocky waterfa',
And cuts sic cantrips in the air,
The picture-pentin' man's despair;

A rountree bus' oot o'er the tap o't,
While on the brink the blue harebell
Keeks o'er to see its bonnie sel',
And sittin' chirpin' a' its lane
A water-waggy on a stane.
Ay, penter lad, throw to the wund
Your canvas, this is holy grund:
Wi' a' its highest art acheevin',
The picter's deed, and this is leevin'.

J. B. SELKIRK

The River of the Playing Fields

THE RIVER of the Playing Fields is not a river of spring or summer only. It is a river of November and the winter, of the cold of February and March, and the flood water out beyond the Slough road and the bridge arches; a river which I saw first on a day late in September expecting something different, and suddenly realising that a door had opened into a new world. I was walking for the first time by the river in the Playing Fields, and the river I had expected to see was something vaguely resembling that shining reach of water with its boats in the sunset which I had gazed at three months earlier in the windows of the Bridge House. It had not occurred to me that the river of the Playing Fields would be empty and quiet, without any boats; and here, instead of what I had looked for, were level spaces of wet grass, fallen chestnut leaves, and a grey-green stream, swirling under the planks and railings by a spreading oak. The surface of the swirling water was suddenly broken. Two great perch, fishes of bronze and scarlet, turned their flanks with a splash not a yard away from me. They were fighting, or both had rushed at the same morsel—I did not know. But the river suddenly became a place, not for boats, but to fish in; and that is the river by the Playing Fields as I remember it and think of it today.

ERIC PARKER

from ETON IN THE EIGHTIES

A Waterfall

Upon the rugged jaws of rocks
 In parried strength the torrents fuse,
And hesitant, with bulbous swell,
 They roll their mighty, lumbering thews:
From Majesty of flood and showers
Man caught the sense of primal powers.
Far down the gorge the waters stream
 And tapestry of gleams imbue,
And through the gush of rock-combed waves
 The sun streamed wonderful to view:
From ecstasy of greens and blues
Man caught the tint of primal hues.
'Mid thundrous pomp of heavy drums
 The waters clash upon the ground,
And foam, spray, swirling eddy-pools,
 Provide a plenitude of sound:
From melodies incised on stones
Man caught the pitch of primal tones.

J. L. FOXWORTHY
from SHY TRAFFICKERS

Ballade of the Tweed

THE ferox rins in rough Loch Awe
 A weary cry frae any toun;
The Spey, that louns o'er linn and fa',
 They praise a'ither streams aboon;
 They boast their braes o' bonny Doon:
Gie *me* to hear the ringing reel,
 Where shilfas sing and cushats croon
By fair Tweed-side, at Ashiesteel!
There's Ettrick, Meggat, Ail and a',
 Where trout swim thick in May and June;
Ye'll see them tak in showers o' snaw
 Some blinking cauldrie April noon:
 Rax ower the palmer and march-broun,

And syne we'll show a bonny creel
In spring or simmer, late or soon,
By fair Tweed-side, at Ashiesteel!

There's mony a water, great or sma',
Gaes singing in his siller tune,
Through glen and heugh, and hope and shaw,
Beneath the sunlicht or the moon:
But set us in our fishing shoon
Between the Caddon-burn and Peel,
And syne we'll cross the heather broun
By fair Tweed-side, at Ashiesteel!

ENVOY

Deil tak the dirty, trading loon
Wad gar the water ca' his wheel,
And drift his dyes and poisons down
By fair Tweed-side at Ashiesteel!

ANDREW LANG

'The Pasture Pond'

From the meadows cool & still,
Where the peewits feed their fill
And into swirling rings upfly
With white breasts dazzling on the eye,
To the pool itself I come
And like rapture am struck dumb.

For if fields and air are free
The water's double liberty,
Where milch cows dewlap-deep may wade
Or jack-hern ply his cunning trade—
Else what vision dares intrude
That many-peopled solitude?

The astonished clouds seem lingering here,
For dragon-flies so whip & veer

And take the sun & turn to flame
They'd make the fastest cloud seem lame,
Or breaths of wind that sometimes fly
And cut faint furrows and are by.

So well may I admire the pool
Where thistles and their caps of wool
(Whence those sly winds some flecks purloin)
Stand sentinels at every coign,
And sorrels rusty-red have banned
Each place the thistle left unmanned.

But passing through, an old ally
Into the bright deeps I may spy,
Where merry younkers, roach or rudd,
Jump for the fly and flounce and scud;
That care for no one now, and live
For every pleasure pools can give.

In russet weeds, by the sunken boat,
That grudge each other room to float,
They hide along, grown fine and fat,
I hear them like a lapping cat
Feed from the stems till hunger's done—
Then out agen to find the sun.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

from THE WAGGONER AND OTHER POEMS

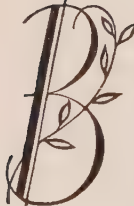
Sights and Sounds

On a Banck as I Sate a Fishing

AND now all *Nature* seem'd in *Love*,
The lusty *Sap* began to move;
New *Juice* did stir th' embracing *Vines*;
And *Birds* had drawn their *Valentines*:
The *jealous Trout* that low did lie,
Rose at a wel-dissembled *Flie*:
There stood my friend, with patient Skill
Attending of his trembling *quill*.
Already were the *Eaves* possess'd
With the swift *Pilgrims* daubed nest.
The *Groves* already did rejoyce
In *Philomels* triumphing *voyce*.
The *showers* were short; the weather *mild*;
The *morning* fresh; the *Evening* smil'd.
 Jone takes her neat-rub'd Pail, and now
She trips to milk the Sand-red Cow;
Where, for some sturdy foot-ball *Swain*,
Jone stroaks a sillibub or twain.
The *Fields* and *Gardens* were beset
With *Tulip*, *Crocus*, *Violet*.
And now, though late, the *modest Rose*
Did more than half a blush disclose.
Thus all look'd gay, all full of *Chear*,
To welcome the New-liveri'd *year*.

SIR HENRY WOTTON

'When I was last a-fishing'

‘UT TURN out of the way a little, good scholar! towards yonder high honeysuckle hedge; there we'll sit and sing whilst this shower falls so gently upon the teeming earth, and gives yet a sweeter smell to the lovely flowers that adorn these verdant meadows. Look! under that broad beech-tree I sat down, when I was last this way a-fishing; and the birds in the adjoining grove seemed to have a friendly contention with an echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in a hollow tree near to

the brow of that primrose-hill. There I sat viewing the silver streams glide silently towards their centre, the tempestuous sea; yet sometimes opposed by rugged roots and pebble-stones, which broke their waves, and turned them into foam; and sometimes I beguiled time by viewing the harmless lambs; some leaping securely in the cool shade, whilst others sported in the cheerful sun; and saw others craving comfort from the swollen udders of their bleating dams.'

IZAAC WALTON
from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

'In His Season'

'*Piscator*: Trust me, Scholar, I have caught many a trout in a particular meadow, that the very shape and the enamelled colour of him hath been such as hath joyed me to look on him: and I have then, with much pleasure, concluded with Solomon, "Everything is beautiful in his season."'

IZAAC WALTON
from THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

On a Summer's Day

HOW silent comes the water round that bend!
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'erhanging sal lows: blades of grass
Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass.
Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach
To where the hurrying fresh nesses aye preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds;
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand!
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain;
But turn your eye, and they are there again.

JOHN KEATS

'Beauty born of Murmuring Sound'

THE stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
 In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
 Shall pass into her face.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Corot's Country

TO MYSELF the difference between angling for trout and angling for salmon is like the difference between a drawing of Lionardo's in silver point, and a loaded landscape by MacGillp, R.A. Trout-fishing is all an idyll, all delicacy—that is, trout-fishing on the Test or on the Itchen. You wander by clear water, beneath gracious poplar-trees, unencumbered with anything but a slim rod of Messrs. Hardy's make, and a light toy-box of delicate flies. You need seldom wade, and the water is shallow, the bottom is of silver gravel. You need not search all day at random, but you select a rising trout, and endeavour to lay the floating fly delicately over him. If you part with him, there is always another feeding merrily:

Invenies alium si te hic fastidit.

It is like an excursion into Corot's country, it is rich in memories of Walton and Cotton: it is a dream of peace, and they bring you your tea by the riverside.

ANDREW LANG
from ANGLING SKETCHES

River Birds

COOTS AND MOOR-HENS

AT ONE spot, where the stream made a slight bend, the floating water-weeds brought down by the current were always being caught by scattered bulrushes growing a few feet from the edge; the arrested weeds formed a minute group of islets, and on these

convenient little refuges and resting-places in the waterway, a dozen or more of the birds could be seen at most times. The old coots would stand on the floating weeds and preen and preen their plumage by the hour. They were like mermaids, forever combing out their locks, and had the clear stream for a mirror. The dull-brown, white-breasted young coots, now fully grown, would meanwhile swim about picking up their own food. The moorhens were with them, preening and feeding, and one had its nest there. It was a very big conspicuous nest, built up on a bunch of floating weeds, and formed, when the bird was sitting on its eggs, a pretty and curious object; for every day fresh bright-green sedge leaves were plucked and woven round it, and on that high bright-green nest, as on a throne, the bird sat, and when I went near the edge of the water, she (or he) would flirt her tail to display the snowy-white under-feathers, and nod her head, and stand up as if to display her pretty green legs, so as to let me see and admire all her colours; and finally, not being at all shy, she would settle quietly down again.

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LITTLE GREBES

THE little grebes, too, had chosen that spot to build on. Poor little grebes! how they worked and sat, and built and sat again, all the summer long. And all along the river it was the same thing—the grebes industriously making their nests, and trying ever so hard to hatch their eggs; and then at intervals of a few days the ruthless water-keeper would come by with his long fatal pole to dash their hopes. For whenever he saw a suspicious-looking bunch of dead floating weeds which might be a grebe's nest, down would come the end of the pole on it, and the eggs would be spilt out of the wet bed, and rolled down by the swift water to the sea. And then the birds would cheerfully set to work again at the very same spot: but it was never easy to tell which bunch of wet weeds their eggs were hidden in. Watching with a glass I could see the hen on her eggs, but if any person approached she would hastily pull the wet weeds from the edge over them, and slip into the water, diving and going away to some distance. While the female sat the male was always

busy, diving and catching little fishes; he would dive down in one spot, and suddenly pop up a couple of yards away, right among the coots and moor-hens. This Jack-in-the-box action on his part never upset their nerves. They took not the slightest notice of him, and were altogether a more of less happy family, all very tolerant of each other's little eccentricities.

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THE LITTLE GREBE GOES FISHING

THE little grebe fished for himself and for his sitting mate; he never seemed so happy and proud as when he was swimming to her, patiently sitting on her wet nest, with a little silvery fish in his beak. He also fished for old decaying weeds, which he fetched up from the bottom to add to the nest. Whenever he popped up among or near the other birds with an old rag of a weed in his beak, one or two of the grown-up young coots would try to take it from him; and seeing them gaining on him he would dive down to come up in another place, still clinging to the old rag half a yard long; and again the chase would be renewed, and again he would dive; until at last, after many narrow escapes and much strategy, the nest would be gained, and the sitting bird would take the weed from him and draw it up and tuck it round her, pleased with his devotedness, and at the sight of his triumph over the coots. As a rule, after giving her something—a little fish, or a wet weed to pull up and make herself comfortable with—they would join their voices in that long trilling cry of theirs, like a metallic, musical-sounding policeman's rattle.

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TRIUMPH OF THE LITTLE GREBES

WE have seen that of these three species the little grebe was not so happy as the others, owing to his taste for little fishes being offensive to the fish-breeder and preserver. When I first saw how this river was watched over by the water-keepers, I came to the conclusion that very few or no dabchicks would succeed in hatching any young. And none were hatched until August, and

then to my surprise I heard at one point the small, plaintive *peep-peep* of the young birds crying to be fed. One little grebe, more cunning or more fortunate than the others, had at last succeeded in bringing off her young; and once out of their shells they were safe. But by-and-by the little duckling-like sound was heard at another point, and then at another; and this continued in September, until, by the middle of that month, you could walk miles along the river, and before you left the sound of one little brood hungrily crying to be fed behind you, the little *peep-peep* of another brood would begin to be heard in advance of you. Often enough it is 'dogged as does it' in bird as well as in human affairs, and never had birds more deserved to succeed than these dogged little grebes.

W. H. HUDSON
from HAMPSHIRE DAYS

'On the Pleasant Brinke'

O LET me rather on the pleasant Brinke
Of *Tyne* and *Trent* possesse some dwelling place
Where I may see my Quill and Corke downe sink
With eager bit of Barbel, Bleike, or Dace:
And on the world and his creatour think,
While they proud *Thais* painted sheet embrace,
And with the fume of strong Tobacco's smoke,
All quaffing round are ready for to choke.

Let them that list these pastimes then pursue,
And on their pleasing fancies feede their fill;
So I the Fields and Meadowes greene may view,
And by the Rivers freshe may walk at will,
Among the *Dazies* and the *Violets* blew:
Red *Hyacinth* and yellow *Daffadill*
Purple *Narcissus* like the morning rayes,
Pale *Ganderglas*, and azor *Culverkayes*.

I count it better pleasure to behold
The goodly compasse of the lofty Skie,

And in the midst thereof like burning gold
The flaming chariot of the world's great eye;
The watry clouds that in the aire uprold
With sundry kindes of painted colours flye;
And faire *Aurora* lifting up her head
All blushing rise from old *Tithonus* bed.

The Hills and Mountaines raised from the Plaines,
The plaines extended levell with the ground,
The ground divided into sundry vaines,
The vaines enclosed with running rivers round,
The rivers making way through nature's chaine,
With headlong course into the sea profound:
The surging Sea beneath the valleys low,
The valleys sweet and lakes that lovely flow.

The lofty woods, the Forrests wide and long,
Adorn'd with leaves and branches fresh and green,
In whose cool brows the birds with chanting song
Do welcom with their quire the Summers queen,
The meadows fair where Flora's guifts among,
Are intermixt the verdant grasse betweene,
The silver skaled fish that softly swimme,
Within the brookes and christall watry brim.

All these and many more of his creation,
That made the heavens the *Angler* oft doth see
And takes therein no little delectation,
To thinke how strange and wonderfull they be,
Framing thereof in inward contemplation,
To set his thoughts on other fancies free,
And whiles he looks on these with joyful eie,
His minde is rapt above the starry skye.

JOHN DENNYS
from THE SECRETS OF ANGLING

The Reeds in the Loch say:

‘THOCH raging stormes move us to shake,
And wind mak waters us o’erflow;
We Yield thereto, but do not break,
And in the calm unbent we grow.

‘So baneist men, (thoch princes rage),
And prisoners, be not despairit.
Abide the blast whill that it ’suage;
For time sic causes has repairit.’

ANONYMOUS

from EDINBURGH BOOK OF SCOTTISH VERSE

In Early Spring

Haleius: How delightful in the early spring, after the dull and tedious time of winter, when the frosts disappear, and the sunshine warms the earth and waters, to wander forth by some clear stream, to see the leaf bursting from the purple bud, to scent the odours of the bank perfumed by the violet, and enamelled, as it were, with the primrose and the daisy; to wander upon the fresh turf below the shade of trees, whose bright blossoms are filled with the music of the bee; and on the surface of the waters to view the gaudy flies sparkling like animated gems in the sunbeams, whilst the bright and beautiful trout is watching them from below; to hear the twittering of the water birds, who, alarmed at your approach, rapidly hide themselves beneath the flowers and leaves of the water-lily; and as the season advances to find all these objects changed for others of the same kind, but better and brighter, till the swallow and the trout contend as it were for the gaudy May-fly, and till in pursuing your amusement on the calm and balmy evening, you are serenaded by the songs of the cheerful thrush and melodious nightingale, performing the offices of paternal love, in thickets ornamented with the rose and the woodbine.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY

from SALMONIA

Ode to the Setting Sun

'... YET who hast snowed the lily:
And her frail sister, whom the waters name,
Dost vestal-vesture 'mid the blaze of June,
Cold as the new-sprung girlhood of the moon
Ere Autumn's kiss sultry her cheek with flame?'

.
'Where is the Naiad 'mid her sworded sedge?
The Nymph wan-glimmering by her wan fount's verge?
The Dryad at timid gaze by the wood-side?
The Oread jutting light
On one up-strained sole from the rock-ledge?
The Nereid tip-toe on the scud o' the surge,
With whistling tresses dank athwart her face,
And all her figure poised in lithe Circean grace?'

FRANCIS THOMPSON
from COLLECTED POEMS

Contemplation

'... THE river has not any care
Its passionless water to the sea to bear;
The leaves have brown content;
The wall to me has freshness like a scent
And takes half animate the air,
Making one life with its green moss and stain;
And life with all things seems too perfect blent
For anything of life to be aware.'

FRANCIS THOMPSON
from COLLECTED POEMS

'The River's Trembling Edge'

AND nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple prank'd with white
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,

Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
from THE QUESTION

Chalk Stream Day

ET a sample of a day's dry-fly-fishing on a chalk stream in the latter half of May be taken first. The angler is by the river not later than ten o'clock: the stream is lively but quiet, and here and there the surface is broken by the recurring whirl of a swaying weed; but no life disturbs it, except the occasional dive of a dabchick, the movements of a watcher or water-vole. Not a bird skims the surface of the water, not a fly is to be seen on it, not a sign of living creature under it. But the fresh light air is like a caress, the warm sun shines interrupted only by the occasional passage of small white clouds, the water meadows are bright with buttercups, and the woods and hedges that are on their borders are white with hawthorn blossom or lit by the candelabra of horse-chestnut flower. Birds of many sorts, most notably blackbirds, are singing and the angler in his hour of waiting has such entertainment as seems more than imperfect man can deserve or comprehend. Presently—it may be soon or not till after an hour or more—flies begin to appear on the surface of the water, the rise of a trout is seen: in a short time all is life and agitation. Trout are rising everywhere, some audibly, some without sound; flies are hatching out all over the river, sitting or skipping in little flights on the water or rising into the air; a moving network of birds, swifts, swallows, and martins, is on the river; a rush of bird life and the swish of the wings of the swifts is heard as they pass and repass up and down the stream; and the angler, no longer inert, is on his knees in the midst of it all, at convenient distance from a rising trout, one arm in constant action and the rod and line making a busy sound in the air as he dries and casts his fly. Now for two hours or more his life is

energy, expectation, anxiety, resource, and effort. After two hours or so the rise begins to slacken; in time it becomes difficult to find a rising fish, and the fish when found is fastidious and hard to tempt; and by two or three or four o'clock, as the case may be, the river has become as lifeless as when the angler first stood by the bank in the morning. The water glides, fresh as ever; the weeds wave, but the rise of fly and fish is over and swifts and swallows and martins have withdrawn to the upper air, or to their various abodes.

VISCOUNT GREY
from FALLODON PAPERS

'Goddess of the Silver Lake'

'SABRINA fair
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassie, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of Lillies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair,
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save.

(SABRINA rises, attended by *Water-Nymphes*, and sings.)
By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the Willow and the Osier dank,
My sliding Chariot stayes,
Thick set with Agat, and the azure sheen
Of Turkis blew, and Emrauld green
That in the channell strays,
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O're the Cowslips Velvet head,
That bends not as I tread,
Gentle swain at thy request
I am here.'

JOHN MILTON
from COMUS: A MASK

‘Hide Me from Day’s Garish Eie’

‘ . . . THERE in close covert by som Brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from Day’s garish eie,
While the Bee with Honied thie,
That at her flowry work doth sing,
And the Waters murmuring
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feather’d Sleep.’

JOHN MILTON
from IL PENSEROSO

A Land of Drowsy-head

A PLEASING land of drowsy-head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky:
There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh;
But whate’er smacked of noyance, or unrest,
Was far, far off expell’d from this delicious nest.

JAMES THOMSON
from THE CASTLE OF INDOLENCE

*‘Prognostics of the Weather, Independent of the
Barometer’*

IF THE rays of the sun, breaking through the clouds, are visible in the air, and appear like those horns of irradiation which painters usually place upon the head of Moses, the air is sensibly filled with vapours, which reflect the rays to the sight, and these vapours will soon produce rain.

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BEFORE ANY considerable quantity of rain is to fall, most living creatures are affected in such sort as to render them some way

sensible of its approach, and of the access of something new to the surface of the earth, and of the atmosphere. Moles work harder than ordinary, they throw up more earth, and sometimes come forth: the worms do so too; ants are observed to stir about, and bustle more than usually for some time, and then retire to their burrows before the rain falls. All sorts of insects and flies are more stirring and busy than ordinary. Bees are ever on this occasion in fullest employ; but betake themselves all to their hives, if not too far for them to reach before the storm arises. The common flesh-flies are more bold and greedy; snails, frogs and toads appear disturbed and uneasy. Fish are sullen and made qualmish by the water more turbid than before. Birds of all sorts are in action; crows are most earnest after their prey, as are also swallows and other small birds, and therefore they fall lower, and fly nearer to the earth in search of insects and such other things as they feed upon. . . . Swine discover great uneasiness; as do likewise sheep, cows and oxen, appearing more solicitous and eager in pasture than usual. Even mankind are not exempt from some sense of a change in their bodies. . . . Against rain fleas bit more than common.

THOMAS BEST
from THE ART OF ANGLING

Fair Days;

or DAWNS DECEITFUL

FAIR was the dawn; and but e'en now the skies
Show'd like to cream, inspir'd with strawberries;
But on a sudden, all was chang'd and gone
That smil'd in that first sweet complexion.

ROBERT HERRICK

How Springs came First

THESE springs were maidens once that lov'd,
But lost to that they most approv'd:
My story tells, by love they were
Turn'd to these springs, which we see here;

The pretty whimpering that they make,
When of the banks their leave they take,
Tells ye but this, they are the same,
In nothing changed but in their name.

ROBERT HERRICK

Hope Well and Have Well;

or FAIR AFTER FOUL WEATHER

WHAT though the heaven be lowering now,
And look with a contracted brow?
We shall discover, by and by,
A repurgation of the sky:
And when these clouds away are driven,
Then will appear a cheerful heaven.

ROBERT HERRICK

Country Dreams

THE damask meadows and the crawling streams
Sweeten and make soft thy dreams;
The purling springs, groves, birds and well-weaved bowers
With fields enamellèd with flowers,
Present thee shapes, while phantasy discloses
Millions of lilies mixed with roses.
Then dream thou hearest the lamb with many a bleat
Woood to come suck the milky teat;
Whilst Faunus in the vision vows to keep
From ravenous wolf the woolly sheep;
With thousands such enchanting dreams, which meet
To make sleep not so sound as sweet;
Nor can these figures so thy rest endear
As not to up when chanticleer
Speaks the last watch, but with the dawn dost rise
To work, but first to sacrifice:
Making thy peace with Heaven for some late fault,
With holy meal and crackling salt.

RICHARD CORBET, BISHOP OF NORWICH

English Streams

ANGLING IS an amusement peculiarly adapted to the mild and highly cultivated scenery of England, where every roughness has been softened away from the landscape. It is delightful to saunter along those limpid streams which wander like veins of silver, through the bosom of this beautiful country; leading one through a diversity of small home scenery; sometimes winding through ornamental grounds; sometimes brimming along rich pasturage, where the fresh green is mingled with sweet smelling flowers; sometimes venturing in sight of villages and hamlets; and then running capriciously away into shady retirements. The sweetness and serenity of nature, and the quiet watchfulness of the sport gradually bring on pleasant fits of musing; which are now and then agreeably interrupted by the song of a bird; the distant whistle of the peasant; or perhaps the vagary of some fish, leaping out of the still water, and skimming transiently about its glassy surface.

WASHINGTON IRVING

from THE SKETCH BOOK OF GEOFFREY CRAYON, GENT.

God of the River

Satyr:

'... AND when the weather
Serves to angle in the brook,
I will bring a silver hook,
With a line of finest silk,
And a rod as white as milk,
To deceive the little fish.' ...

.

God of the River:

'I am this fountain's god: below,
My waters to a river grow,
And 'twixt two banks with osiers set,
That only prosper in the wet,
Through the meadows do they glide,
' Wheeling still on every side,

Sometimes winding round about,
To find the evenest channel out.
And if thou wilt go with me,
Leaving mortal company,
In the cool streams shalt thou lie,
Free from harm as well as I:
I will give thee for thy food
No fish that useth in the mud;
But trout and pike, that love to swim
Where the gravel from the brim
Through the pure streams may be seen;
Orient pearl fit for a queen,
Will I give, thy love to win,
And a shell to keep them in;
Not a fish in all my brook
That shall disobey thy look,
But, when thou wilt, come sliding by,
And from thy white hand take a fly.' . . .

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Amoret:

'For thy kindness to me shown,
Never from thy banks be blown
Any tree, with windy force,
Cross thy streams, to stop thy course;
May no beast that comes to drink,
With his horns cast down thy brink;
May none that for thy fish do look,
Cut thy banks to dam thy brook;
Barefoot may no neighbour wade
In thy cool streams, wife nor maid,
When the spawns on stones do lie,
To wash their hemp, and spoil the fry!'

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER
from THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS

'Stainless Water'

WE CAN no more word-paint the water than we can the sunbeam. The intenser the feeling for the beauty of these fountains from the benign chalk, the less the power to communicate our thought of it to others. Ruskin went nearest telling what he saw in a chalk stream—a 'welling of stainless water, trembling and pure, like a body of light . . . cutting itself a radiant channel down to the gravel, through a warp of feathery weeds, all waving, which it traverses with its deep threads of clearness like the chalcedony in moss agate, stained here and there with the white of grenouillette.' Here, at least, we have a suggestion of the play and sparkle of the chalk stream, the tremulous, sinuous lines drawn through the fast, smooth currents. But who ever went near to write down its responsiveness to the slightest change in the mood of the March or June day? The quickest plate is insensitive to the sunlight compared with the face of the chalk stream.

G. A. B. DEWAR
from THE FAERY YEAR

The Angler's Wish

I IN these flowery meads would be:
These crystal streams should solace me;
To whose harmonious bubbling noise
I with my angle would rejoice:
Sit, here, and see the turtle-dove
Court his chaste mate to acts of love:

Or, on that bank, feel the west wind
Breathe health and plenty: please my mind
To see sweet dewdrops kiss these flowers,
And then washed off by April showers:
Here, hear my Kenna sing a song;
There, see a blackbird feed her young.

Or a laverock build her nest:
Here, give my weary spirits rest,

And raise my low-pitched thoughts above
Earth, or what poor mortals love:
Thus, free from lawsuits and the noise
Of princes' courts, I would rejoice.

Or, with my Bryan, and a book,
Loiter long days near Shawford brook,
There sit by him and eat my meat,
There see the sun both rise and set,
There bid good morning to next day.
There meditate my time away,
And angle on; and beg to have
A quiet passage to a welcome grave.

IZAACK WALTON

Trolling Song

THE bell-throats o' the bonny birds ring,
When the angler goes a-trolling;
The south wind waves his cheery wing,
And gentle rains are falling.

The white thorn bears its bridal wreath,
When the angler goes a-trolling;
And hark! along the bloomy heath
The plaintive plover calling!

Breezy and brown the rivers glide,
When the angler goes a-trolling;
The dark burns leave the green hill-side
Among the pebbles brawling.

Upon the meadow, by the springs,
The quiet herds are lolling;
All earth is full of happy things
When the angler goes a-trolling!

THOMAS TOD STODDART

The Dragonfly

LIFE (priest and poet say) is but a dream;
I wish no happier one than to be laid
Beneath a cool syringa's scented shade,
Or wavy willow, by the running stream,
Brimful of moral, where the dragon fly
Wanders as careless and content as I.

Thanks for this fancy, insect king
Of purple crest and filmy wing,
Who with indifference givest up
The water-lily's golden cup,
To come again and overlook
What I am writing in my book.
Believe me, most who read the line
Will read with hornier eyes than thine;
And yet their souls shall live for ever,
And thine drop dead into the river!
God pardon them, O insect king,
Who fancy so unjust a thing!

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

Golden Plover

THE GREEN plover's cry is the dominant sound of the uplands; a wild note of new nests and new danger, a crying of perilous mating, of sheer physical joy of zigzag flight in spring airs. But the green plover's note prevails only because there are more green plover than golden plover. The golden plover's mating call is the wildest and truest of all cries of melting snow. In the upland levels, where the snows warm to steam and water first on the bare slopes that front the noon sunlight, the water urges its own small river-course from the highest plateaus of the hill through snow banks which it carves and widens for itself. The clear stream ripples and tumbles to a roar in the valley, running on the higher ground over grass passages that through all the summer will never feel the pull of water at the grass-bents and ragged heather. The streams go the easiest way down the hill, that is all; much as the shepherds or the sheep always find their way down by the

quickest and gentlest road. And by that easy course of cold water the golden plover walk and fly and call. They separate into pairs more distinctly than the green plover, and they mark the change more clearly, showing their deep black splashes on cheek and breast,—the mark of the mating months that will alter back to the chequered olive of autumn and winter. They change their call, too, from the high, ringing whistle of winter to the most delicate note of complaining; sometimes a double note of some sweet inquiry which always brings its own answer; sometimes a triumphant, bubbling cry which quickens with a quickened beat of wings. The golden plover's wings keep time to his cries and his silences; he and his mate poise and counterpoise to each other in curves and slopes of buoyant flight; his silence is on level, unshaken wings, his inquiring call on a slow beat, and his chuckling joy on a double beat that changes again to level quiet, to settling again by the racing snow-water.

These sounds come down to the river from the uplands, and the salmon fisher and the shepherd hear them first.

ERIC PARKER

from IN WIND AND WILD

A Faun's Holiday

THE NAIAD'S MUSIC

The Naiads—

'COME, ye sorrowful, and take
Kisses that are but half awake:
For here are eyes O softer far
Than the blossom of the star
Upon the mothy twilit waters,
And here are mouths whose gentle laughter
Are but the echoes of the deep
Laughing and murmuring in its sleep.

Come, ye sorrowful, and see
The raindrops flaming goldenly
On the stream's eddies overhead
And dragonflies with drops of red
In the crisp surface of each wing
Threading slant rains that flash and sing,

Or under the water-lily's cup,
From darkling depths, roll slowly up
The bronze flanks of an ancient bream
Into the hot sun's shattered beam,
Or over a sunk tree's bubbled bole
The perch stream in a golden shoal:
Come, ye sorrowful; our deep
Holds dreams lovelier than sleep.'

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OF THE SATYRS' FEAST

'High o'er the feast a fronded ash
Hangs full of sunlight, and the splash
Of the spring's leap or gurgling flow
Into the rippled pool below,
Where lilies rock, shakes up a bright
Eddy of golden tremulous light
Over the leaves.' ...

.

OF THE EVENING RIVER

'But now the sun sinks I will go
Whither two full streams meet and flow,
Murmuring as in wedded sleep
Through evening meadows dim and deep.
There will I watch the slow trout rise
At the myriad simmering flies,
And listen to the water flowing
With such faint sounds there is no knowing
Whether its spirit laughs or weeps
Among the dreams wherein it sleeps.
Sunken amid the twilight grass,
I will watch the water pass,
Weaving ever dimmer tales
And dimmer as the evening pales ...
Till from the calm the silent lark
Drops to the meadows hushed and dark

While in the stagnant silver west,
Above the tranquil poplars' crest,
There glimmers through the murky bar
The slowly climbing Hesperal Star.

Thus brooding by the hazy stream,
I shall hear the water dream
Tinkily on, and I shall see,
As my eyes close quietly,
Into a soft and long repose,
The lone star like a silver rose
Fade with me on the drifting stream
Into the quiet night of dream.'

ROBERT NICHOLS

from ARDOURS AND ENDURANCES

Strings in the Earth

Strings in the earth and air
 Make music sweet;
Strings by the river where
 The willows meet.

There's music along the river,
 For Love wanders there,
Pale flowers in his mantle,
 Dark leaves in his hair.

All softly playing,
 With head to the music bent,
And fingers straying
 Upon an instrument.

JAMES JOYCE

Mind Under Water

DOES HE hear the stream running past him? Do the particles of water, as they brush his sides and fins, cause a sound, as the wind by us? While he lurks beneath a weed in the still pool, suddenly a shoal of roach rush by with a sound like a flock of birds whose wings beat the air. The smooth surface of the still water appears to

cover an utter silence, but probably to the fish there are ceaseless sounds. Water-fowl feeding in the weedy corners, whose legs depend down into the water and disturb it; water rats diving and running along the bottom; water beetles moving about; eels in the mud; the lower parts of flags and aquatic grasses swinging as the breeze ruffles their tips; the thud, thud of a horse's hoofs, and now and then the more distant roll of a hay-laden waggon. And thunder—how does thunder sound under the surface?

RICHARD JEFFERIES
from THE LIFE OF THE FIELDS

Days Too Short

WHEN Primroses are out in spring,
And small, blue violets come between;
When merry birds sing on boughs green,
And rills, as soon as born, must sing;
When butterflies will make side-leaps,
As though escaped from Nature's hand
Ere perfect quite; and bees will stand
Upon their heads in fragrant deeps;
When small clouds are so silvery white
Each seems a broken rimmed moon—
When such things are, this world too soon,
For me, doth wear the veil of Night.

W. H. DAVIES
from COLLECTED POEMS, SERIES I

The Evening Rise

LITTEN with lots and lots of little moons,
Broods o'er the bosky bank the guelder rose;
She watches by the river as it goes,
Knowing its whispered secrets and its runes,
And that it's useless in these afternoons
Of midsummer; I hardly dare suppose
A trout had stirred just then for all our throws
And feathered lures begirt of silk cocoons.

But now hath come the coolth and kindliness
Of eve, and we may get to work again;
See, there's a budge and there a fish came up,
And we anon shall levy toll and e'en
A brace mayhap; and still before the train
Have time for supper and a cider-cup!

PATRICK R. CHALMERS
from GREEN DAYS AND BLUE DAYS

Spring Salmon

It's oh, but I'm dreaming
Of grey water streaming,
Great rivers that go gleaming
Where brown the heather blows.
Ere May's southern graces
Rub out the last white traces
From high and mountain places
Of stubborn, storm-packed snows!

The chill wind that searches
The low-lying birches,
The old red grouse that perches
And swaggers in the sun;
I'm fain for its blowing,
I'm restless for his crowing
And it's I that would be going
Where the spring salmon run!

And oh, were they bulking
Bright silver, or sulking—
In the snow-broth a-skulking,
I would not care at all,
I'd hear the falls ringing,
I'd see the pine-tops swinging
In a wind that's filled with singing
When the green plover call!

PATRICK R. CHALMERS
from GREEN DAYS AND BLUE DAYS

England and Spring

ENGLAND, LIKE Becky Sharp, never bores one. She is one of those rare countries where spring will keep breaking in, whatever the theme of the month or week is supposed to be.

SIR WILLIAM BEACH THOMAS
from THE OBSERVER

'Sound o' Water'

I BORN in town! oh no, my dawn
O' life broke here beside theäse lawn;
Not where pent äir do roll along,
In darkness through the wall-bound drong,
An' never bring the goo-coo's zong,
Nor sweets o' blossoms in the hedge,
Or sheenèn rush, or sheenèn zedge,
Or sounds o' flowèn water.

The äir that I've a-breath'd did sheäke
The draps o' räin upon the breäke,
An' beat aloft the swingèn lark,
An' huffle roun' the elem's bark,
In boughy grove, an' woody park,
An' brought us down the dewy dells,
The high-wound zongs o' nightingeäles,
An' sounds o' flowèn water.

An' when the sun, wi' vi'ry rim,
'S a-zinkèn low, an' wearèn dim,
Her I, a-most too tired to stand,
Do leäve my work that's under hand
In pathless wood or obeñ land,
To rest 'ithin my thatchèn oves,
Wi' ruslèn win's in leafy groves,
An' sounds o' flowèn water.

WILLIAM BARNES
from POEMS OF RURAL LIFE IN THE DORSET DIALECT

'Overlooking the River Stour'

THE swallows flew in the curves of an eight
 Above the river-gleam
 In the wet June's last beam:
Like little crossbows animate
The swallows flew in the curves of an eight
 Above the river-gleam.

Planing up shavings of crystal spray
 A moor-hen darted out
 From the bank thereabout,
And through the stream-shine ripped his way;
Planing up shavings of crystal spray
 A moor-hen darted out.

Closed were the kingcups; and the mead
 Dripped in monotonous green,
 Though the day's morning sheen
Had shown it golden and honeybee'd;
Closed were the kingcups; and the mead
 Dripped in monotonous green.

And never I turned my head, alack,
 While these things met my gaze
Through the pane's drop-drenched glaze,
To see the more behind my back . . .
O never I turned, but let, alack,
 These less things hold my gaze!

THOMAS HARDY
from COLLECTED POEMS

The Dominion of the Dumb

HAVE YOU ever wondered what a strange, eerie world the water-world must be? . . . no sound breaks the tuneless gloom of the reedy lairs in which the great fish lurk; no footfall echoes through the rush-strewn halls of those dim shades. No voice rings down those corridors of silence, no male thing calls to his mate, no murmurs of advancing or retreating foes; no bird's songs psalm

the glory of their god—all is strangely still and silent, for are not all the living creatures in this soundless underworld mute?

Aye, and yet beautiful. Far down in the green pellucid deeps are cathedral aisles of tall reed stems and machicolated arches of waving fronds. No columns of feathery acanthus on the grave of Callimachos's fair daughter could be more gracefully festooned than are the broader leaves of the water parsnip (*Sium latifolium*), with the waving stems bearing rich umbels of white blossoms; or the flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) . . . which hangs its garlands of pink flowerets over the silent pool. How often must the exile, even though placed may be in more exotic waters, have sighed for the perfume of the Loddon lilies? That lovely plant, the water violet, . . . with its quaintly formed yellow blossoms and the bladders on its leaves, is a thing of sheer delight. The sweet sturdy stems of the succulent balsams plunge their forms, tawny orange red flowers dangling from cherry-like stalks, deep into the water under the towzled bank, which is a wilderness of bloom and briar and bulrush.

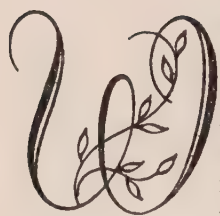
Gaze down into the water and there you will see curious, ghost-like forms, gliding like shadow-shapes in and out of their watery Valhalla—as silent as now are the Halls of Aesir. No sound comes from them; so silently do they move that the water is scarcely stirred. In and out they glide, only their prehensile lips opening and shutting as they pass. They do not speak; they do not murmur; they cannot even whisper . . . Dumb they are, and speechless we think them. Their fishy eyes—red, yellow or white—are round and motionless. Even in deep waters they can only see in one direction at a time. Staring, fixed and changeless, there are times, when gazing on these uncanny discs, one thinks one is looking into the immutable eyes of doom.

A. M. YOUNG

from THE STORY OF THE STREAM

The End of Life

'Less Unready to Die'



ALTON—'Whenever I am beside a river or rivulet upon a sunny day, and think a little while, and let images warm into life about me, and joyous sounds increase and multiply in their innocence, the sun looks brighter and feels warmer, and I am readier to live and less unready to die.'

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR
from IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS

'The Skeleton Angler'

A 'PISCATORIAL PUFF' issued some years ago in the form of a handbill by a fishing-tackle maker in Hungerford Market. It was headed 'The Skeleton Angler,' and in the last edition revised by himself it thus runs:

When the old cock in yon grey tower
Proclaims the deep, still midnight hour,
And ominous birds are on the wing,
I rise from the realms of the bony king.
My bonny elm coffin I shoulder and take
To fish in the blood-red phantom lake,
Where many a brace of spectral trout
For ever frisk, dart and frolic about;
Then the hyaena's ravening voice
Gladdens and makes my heart rejoice.
The glow-worm and the death's-head moth
Are killing baits in the crimson froth.
For work-bench I've the sculptured tomb,
Where tackle I form by the silent moon;
Of churchyard yew my rods I make;
Worms from the putrid corpse I take;
Lines I plait from the golden hair
Pluck'd from the head of a damsel fair;
Floats of the mournful cypress tree
I carve while night-winds whistle free;

My plummets are moulded of coffin lead;
 For paste I seize the parish bread;
 The screech-owl's or raven's wing
 For making flies are just the thing.
 Should thunder roll, from the barren shore
 I bob for eels in the crimson gore;
 A human skull is my live-bait can;
 My ground-bait the crumbling bones of man;
 My lusty old coffin for punt I take
 To angle by night in the phantom lake.
 While Dante's wing'd demons are hovering o'er
 The skeleton trout of the crimson gore,
 To the blood-red phantom lake I go,
 While vampire-bats flit to and fro.

Scene the Second (Sunrise)

The owl is at roost in his ivy'd bower
 The bat hangs up in the old church tower,
 The raven's head is beneath his wing,
 The skeleton sleeps with the bony king,
 The fierce hyaena has left the grave
 To seek repose in his darksome cave.
 The author of this piscatorial treat
 Is the far-famed E. Davis, of King William Street;
 Twenty-one is the number o'erlooking the Strand;
 His prices are lowest in all the land.

J. J. MANLEY

from NOTES ON FISH AND FISHING

'Tam Samson Dead'

now safe the stately sawmont sail,
 And trouts bedropp'd wi' crimson hail,
 And eels weel ken'd for souple tail,
 And geds for greed,
 Since dark in Death's fish-creel we wail
 Tam Samson dead!

ROBERT BURNS

from TAM SAMSON'S ELEGY

The Devout Angler

The years will bring their anodyne
But I shall never quite forget
The fish that I had counted mine
And lost before they reached the net.

Last night I put my rod away
Remorseful and disconsolate,
Yet I had suffered yesterday
No more than I deserved from Fate.

And as I scored another trout
Upon my list of fish uncaught,
I should have offered thanks, no doubt,
For salutary lessons taught.

Alas! Philosophy avails
As little as it used to do.
More comfort is there still in tales
That may be, or may not, be true.

Is it not possible to pray
That I may see those fish once more?—
I hear a voice that seems to say,
‘They are not lost but gone before.’

When in my pilgrimage I reach
The river that we all must cross,
And land upon that further beach
Where earthly gains are counted loss,

May I not earthly loss repair?
Well, if those fish should rise again,
There shall be no more parting there—
Celestial gut will stand the strain.

And issuing from the portal, one
Who was himself a fisherman
Will drop his keys and, shouting, run
To help me land leviathan.

COLIN D. B. ELLIS
from THE LONDON MERCURY

The Last Chance

WITHIN the streams, Pausanias saith,
That down Cocytus valley flow,
Girdling the gray domain of Death,
The spectral fishes come and go;
The ghosts of trout flit to and fro.
Persephone, fulfil my wish;
And grant that in the shades below
My ghost may land the ghosts of fish.

ANDREW LANG

Fareweel to Coquet

COME bring to me my limber gad
I've fished wi' mony a year,
An' let me hae my weel-worn creel,
An' a' my fishing gear;
The sunbeams glint on Linden-Ha',
The breeze comes frae the west,
An' lovely looks the gowden morn
On the streams that I like best.

I've thrawn the flee they sixty year,
Ay, sixty year an' mair,
An' monie a speckled Troutie kill'd
Wi' heckle, heuk, an' hair;
An' now I'm auld an' feeble grown,
My locks are like the snaw,
But I'll gang again to Coquet-side,
An' take a fareweel thraw.

O Coquet! in my youthfu' days
Thy river sweetly ran,
An' sweetly down thy woody braes
The bonnie birdies sang;
But streams may rin, an' birds may sing,
Sma' joy they bring to me,
The blithesome strains I dimly hear,
The streams I dimly see.

But, ance again the weel-kenn'd sounds
My minutes shall beguile,
An' glistening in the airy sun
I'll see thy waters smile;
An' Sorrow shall forget his sigh,
An' Age forget his pain,
An' ance mair, by sweet Coquet-side,
My heart be young again.

Ance mair I'll touch wi' gleesome foot
Thy waters clear and cold,
Ance mair I'll cheat the gleg-e'd trout,
An' wile him frae his hold;
Ance mair, at Weldon's frien'ly door
I'll wind my tackle up,
An' drink 'Success to Coquet-side,'
Though a tear fa' in the cup.

An' then fareweel, dear Coquet-side!
Aye gaily may thou rin,
An' lead thy waters sparkling on,
An' dash frae linn to linn;
Blithe be the music of thy streams
An' banks through after days,
An' blithe be every Fisher's heart
Shall ever tread thy Braes!

THOMAS DOUBLEDAY
from THE NEWCASTLE FISHERS' GARLANDS

Death's Trade

DEATH is a fisherman, the world we see
His fish-pond is, and we the fishes be.
He, sometimes, angler-like, doth with us play,
And slily takes us one by one away;
Diseases are the murdering hooks, which he
Doth catch us with, the bait mortality,
Which we poor silly fish devour, till strook,
At last, too late, we feel the bitter hook.

At other times he brings his net, and then
At once sweeps up whole cities-full of men,
Drawing up thousands at a draught, and saves
Only some few, to make the others' graves,
His net some raging pestilence; now he
Is not so kind as other fishers be;
For if they take one of the smaller fry,
They throw him in again, he shall not die:
But death is sure to kill all he can get,
And all is fish with him that comes to net.

ANONYMOUS (17TH CENTURY)

The Old Angler

TWILIGHT leaned mirrored in a pool
Where willow boughs swept green and hoar,
Silk-clear the water, calm and cool,
Silent the woody shore:

There in abstracted, brooding mood
One fishing sate. His painted float
Motionless as a planet stood;
Motionless his boat.

A melancholy soul was this,
With lantern jaw, gnarled hand, vague eye;
Huddled in pensive solitariness
He had fished existence by.

Empty his creel; stolen his bait—
Impassively he angled on,
Though mist now showed the evening late
And daylight well-nigh gone.

Suddenly, like a tongueless bell,
Downward his gaudy cork did glide;
A deep, low-gathering, gentle swell
Spread slowly far and wide.

Wheeped out his tackle from noiseless winch,
And furtive as a thief, his thumb,
With nerve intense, wound inch by inch
A line no longer numb.

What fabulous spoil could thus unplayed
Gape upward to a mortal air?—
He stoops engrossed; his tanned cheek greyed
His heart stood still: for there,

Wondrously fairing, beneath the skin
Of secretly bubbling water seen,
Swims—not the silver of scale and fin—
But gold immixt with green.

Deeply astir in oozy bed,
The darkening mirror ripples and rocks:
And lo—a wan-pale, lovely head,
Hook tangled in its locks!

Cold from her haunt—a Naiad slim.
Shoulder and cheek gleamed ivory white;
Though now faint stars stood over him,
The hour hard on night.

Her green eyes gazed like one half-blind
In sudden radiance; her breast
Breathed the sweet air, while gently twined,
'Gainst the cold water pressed

Her lean webbed hands. She floated there,
Light as a scentless petalled flower,
Water-drops dewing from her hair
In tinkling beadlike shower.

So circling sidelong, her tender throat
Uttered a grieving desolate wail;
Shrill o'er the dark pool lapsed its note,
Piteous as nightingale.

Ceased Echo. And he?—a life's remorse
 Welled to a tongue unapt to charm,
But never a word broke harsh and hoarse
 To quiet her alarm.

With infinite stealth his twitching thumb
 Tugged softly at the tautened gut,
Bubble-light, fair, her lips now dumb,
 She moved, and struggled not;

But with set, wild, unearthly eyes
 Pale-gleaming, fixed as if in fear,
She couched in the water, with quickening sighs,
 And floated near.

In hollow heaven the stars were at play;
 Wan glow-worms greened the pool-side grass:
Dipped the wide-bellied boat. His prey
 Gazed on; nor breathed. Alas!—

Long sterile years had come and gone;
 Youth, like a distant dream, was sped;
Heart, hope, and eyes had hungered on . . .
 He turned a shaking head,

And clumsily groped amid the gold,
 Sleek with night dews, of that tangling hair,
Till pricked his finger keen and cold
 The barb imbedded there.

Teeth clenched, he drew his knife—'Snip, snip,'—
 Groaned, and sate shivering back; and she,
Treading the water with birdlike dip,
 Shook her sweet shoulders free:

Drew backward, smiling, infatuate fair,
 His life's disasters in her eyes,
All longing and folly, grief, despair,
 Daydreams and mysteries.

She stooped her brow; laid low her cheek,
And, steering on that silk-tressed craft,
Out from the listening, leaf-hung creek,
Tossed up her chin, and laughed—

A mocking, icy, inhuman note.
One instant flashed that crystal breast,
Leaned, and was gone. Dead-still the boat:
And the deep dark at rest.

Flits moth to flower. A water-rat
Noses the placid ripple. And lo!
Streams a lost meteor. Night is late,
And daybreak zephyrs flow. . . .

And he—the cheated? Dusk till morn,
Insensate, even of hope forsook,
He muttering squats, aloof, forlorn,
Dangling a baitless hook.

WALTER DE LA MARE
from THE VEIL

The Old Fisherman

OLD Cinyras, too tired to haul,
Leaves to the nymphs a net, his all—
And, since his age emancipates the seas,
Fishes, enjoy your unmolested peace.

FROM THE GREEK ANTHOLOGY
(VIOLA GERARD GARVIN: 'DEDICATION')

Fisher Jamie

PUIR Jamie's killed. A better lad
Ye wadna find to busk a flee
Or burn a pùle or wield a gad
Frae Berwick to the Clints o' Dee.

And noo he's in a happier land.—
It's Gospel truith and Gospel law
That Heaven's yett maun open stand
To folk that for their country fa'.

But Jamie will be ill to mate;
He lo'ed nae mūsic, kenned nae tūnes
Except the sang o' Tweed in spate,
Or Talla loupin' ower its linns.

I sair misdoot that Jamie's heid
A croun o' gowd will never please;
He liked a kep o' dacent tweed
Whaur he could stick his casts o' flees.

If Heaven is a' that man can dream
And a' that honest herts can wish,
It maun provide some muirland stream,
For Jamie dreamed o' nocht but fish.

And weel I wot he'll up and speir
In his bit blate and canty way,
Wi' kind Apostles standin' near
Whae in their time were fishers tae.

He'll offer back his gowden croun
And in its place a rod he'll seek,
And bashfu'-like his herp lay down
And speir a leister and a cleek.

For Jims had aye a poachin' whim;
He'll sūne grow tired wi' lawfu' flee
Made frae the wings o' cherubim,
O' castin' ower the Crystal Sea...

I picter him at gloamin' tide
Steekin the backdoor o' his hame
And hastin' to the waterside
To play again the auld auld game;

And syne wi' saumon on his back,
Catch't clean against the Heavenly law,
And Heavenly byliffs on his track,
Gaun linkin' doun some Heavenly shaw.

JOHN BUCHAN
from THE NORTHERN MUSE

The Fisherman

BESIDE the turbid stream of life
Sits the grim fisherman, who plies
His rod above the troubled strife,
Patient and watchful, nor denies
Any by reason of its size.

And I, too, on some careless day,
Shall feel the hook I had not guessed;
And I shall try to break away,
And go, after a brief protest,
Into the basket, with the rest.

ROBERT BELL
from AFTERTHOUGHTS



